Football Premiership Arsenal 1 Manchester United 0

Rioch builds on Graham's base

David Lacey

ADMIRABLE though the Football Association's proposed inquest on the country's latest failures in Europe may be, it is bound to be flawed by the absence of one of those best qualified to give a perceptive view. For whatever contribution to the debate George Graham might have been able to make, the FA could not possibly accept it, not even in a plain brown envelope.

In winning the Cup Winners' Cup with Arsenal two seasons ago and setting them in train for the final last May Graham showed that, although the English game might be behind the rest of Europe in technique, it was still possible to organise a team to see off some of the better foreign sides.

The bungs scandal has made Graham a footballing pariah. Yet the Arsenal which at Highbury brought about Manchester United's second Premiership defeat of the season was, in essence, still Graham's Arsenal even if the only goal of the game was scored by Dennis Bergkamp, whose £7.5 million arrival from Internazionale in the summer, along with the Italian-speaking David Platt, appeared to personify the dawning of an age of enlightenment under Bruce Rioch.

The victory was built on the defensive solidity and soundness in goal which underwrote Graham's championship triumphs of 1989 and 1991. And while the sight of an Arsenal side getting the ball down and playing it to feet may have conjured up images of Brady or Eastham, it needs to be remembered that the team of Rocastle and Thomas was working along not dissimilar lines before finesse was abandoned to get the ball quickly up to Wright.

Rioch is nobody's fool. Realising that he did not become manager through Arsenal's failure on the field, he has set out to rearrange the superstructure without disturbing the foundations. "Don't touch the back five, they're OK," was the advice from Graham's old backroom staff, and so Arsenal's latest title challenge will rely as heavily as ever on Adams's leadership, Seaman's goalkeeping and the consistency of Dixon, Bould and Winterburn.

"As they kept saying when I was in America, 'Defence, defence, you need to have a good defence'," said Rioch after last Saturday's game. With his sharp suit, easy manner and professional smile he looked every inch the LA lawyer.

Rioch has been in charge for only a dozen League matches but, if Arsenal's passing continues to improve at the present rate, then only good can come of it. Yet there is still considerable room for improvement, especially in the matter of final passes and centres.

Saturday's goal, after 14 minutes, owed something to a quick lob up the right by Platt but more to Irwin's failure to play the ball back to Schmeichel first time. Bergkamp's speed and composed finish did the rest.

The Dutchman has now scored seven goals in eight games and his heavy involvement in this match suggested his art has now come to terms with the English need for graft. But with Wright facing his first suspension of the season, Bergkamp may shortly find himself partnering Hartson, a rather different kind of striker.

Rioch clearly believes he can marry the attacking flair he achieved with Bolton, and which managed to defeat Arsenal a week ago, with Highbury's traditional defensive strengths. Training, he explained, was now all about "small-sided games, regular warm-ups, loads of passing, one-touch, two-touch, being comfortable on the ball". For Bergkamp, this must be like going back to primary school.

Some of United's passing became uncharacteristically cramped as Giggs, Keane, Cantona, Butt and Scholes opted for crochet-work rather than broad-weave. But Arsenal still might not have won on Saturday had Seaman been less alert and Cole less profligate.

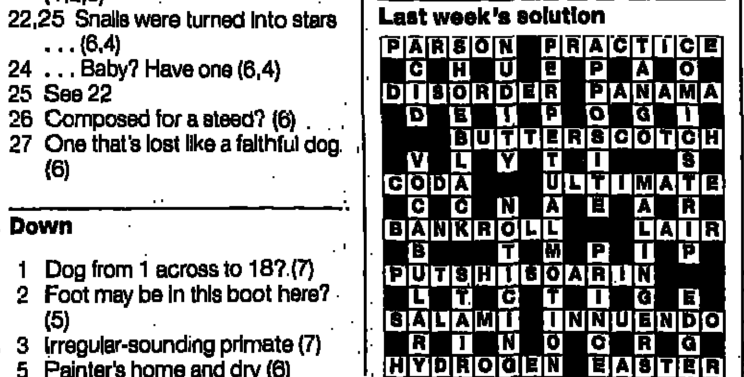
Cantona, with a wonderfully disguised through-pass, and then Keane set up chances for Cole which, even allowing for Seaman's speed off his line, should have been taken. One shot was saved and the other went wide. With his indifferent first touch and only two goals this season, Cole is starting to look like the £7 million sell of the century.

Arsenal have kept seven clean sheets in a dozen league games but McGinlay's goal for Bolton and those Cole should have scored here offered reminders of the habitual squareness of even the better centre-back partnerships that European attacks will usually exploit.



Overshadowed . . . Great Britain's women hockey team warmed up for the Olympic qualifying tournament by completing a white-wash on Russia, beating the visitors in all three Tests at Bisham Abbey.

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria



Across

1 The stars that fail (6)
4 Digital language? (6)
9 Tainted like the stars? (4)
10 Forest and castle stagger Sir Bernard (10)
11 Alcohol in the bloodstream, maybe after numbered hole (6)
12 Firsts first: you get killed returning without it (8)
13 1 across refined South African prime minister (4,5)
15 Piece canned by star (4)
16 Cipher or defined ethics (4)
17 Scrub the tea: have salmon on a plate (9 in Western) (9)
21 A 25 in beer: take your pick (1,2,5)
22,25 Snails were turned into stars . . . (6,4)
24 . . . Baby? Have one (6,4)
25 See 22
26 Composed for a steed? (6)
27 One that's lost like a faithful dog (6)

Down

1 Dog from 1 across to 18? (7)
2 Foot may be in this boot here? (5)
3 Irregular-sounding primate (7)
5 Painter's home and dry (6)
6 Large bird, switchback with 1 across (3,6)
7 King's companion at French city: his 25 is 1 across (7)
8 Psychotics subvert small hospital having chosen prizes (13)
14 Gave up job when sailor departed without punishment (9)
16 Scale of clues is wrong (7)
18 Obsolete weapon in 24 (7)
19 Many items — not thousands — used for convenience (7)
20 Art investigator could be 9 in the hierarchy (6)
23 Broadcaster could be worse (5)

Last week's solution

PARSON PRACTICE
C H U E P A O
DISORDER PANAMA
D E I P O G I
BUTTERSCOTCH
V L Y T I S
CODA ULTIMATE
C C N A E A R
BANKROLL LAIR
B T M P I P
PUTSHISOARIN
L T C T I G E
SALAMI INNUENDO
R I N O C R G
HYDROGEN EASTER

Tennis British National Championships

Henman rides onslaught

David Irvine

TIM HENMAN, who claimed only 12 points in the opening set, took an agonising 63 minutes to edge ahead against Greg Rusedski in the final of the national championships before a capacity crowd at Telford on Sunday but only a further 17 to win the title for the first time.

Henman's fighting recovery, built on a more effective serve and superior all-court game, stunned the favourite — who seemed to be cruising at a set and a break up — and was deservedly rewarded by the 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 score. At 21 Henman is the youngest winner of the title.

Henman also took both the singles and doubles titles at the Challenger event in Seoul — perhaps not nine days to shake the tennis world but a run that may have encouraging repercussions for the British game.

It was the manner of Henman's victory that delighted the Establishment and a weary Henman, too. "This is a title I'm proud to have. And the prize-money [£10,250] comes in handy. I'm just a little disappointed it does nothing for my ranking," though he hopes to improve that in Beijing this week.

Rusedski, who had won the first set despite making only 45 per cent of his first serves, became increasingly wayward as he tried to blast his opponent away. "I tried too hard," he admitted later. "That was a mistake."

It was also another rather wor[…] ing example of Rusedski's incon[…] tency. He appears over-depend[…] on his serve — the fastest on the men's tour — and it is less effec[…] without the right back-up.

As Henman began expos[…] Rusedski's limitations in the fo[…] court with short dipping retur[…] the match somersaulted in the N[…] seed's favour after he held for […] Seven successive games went […] Henman and, for Rusedski — w[…] kept plucking noisily on his rac[…] strings — there was no way back.

So sound was Henman on ser[…] that he dropped only three m[…] points on it once he got ahead, wh[…] Rusedski made 10 double faults, […] ninth costing him his serve at the start of the third.

Rusedski was gracious in defea[…] "Tim showed a lot of character a[…] belief in himself out there. He ob[…] ously felt he could win no mat[…] what. He seems very strong men[…] tally — and that's good."

A victory over the world No[…] only a day after roasting Jere[…] Bates, who was 55th in the world […] April, should work wonders f[…] Henman's confidence.

Victory for Clare Wood in t[…] women's singles on Saturday, h[…] third title in seven years, marked […] encouraging end to a disappoint[…] year. Wood took 57 minutes to c[…] firm her position as the No 1 se[…] defeating the No 8 Samantha Sm[…] 6-2, 6-2.

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The Washington Post · Le Monde

Shell undeterred by Nigeria hangings

Stephen Bates in Brussels and Owen Bowcott

SHELL is to press ahead with fresh investments in Nigeria, the company indicated on Monday, despite worldwide revulsion at the military regime's execution of nine Ogoni activists.

The forthright line taken by the petroleum multinational followed a high-level meeting between a senior company executive and Foreign Office officials in London on Monday. Its decision not to back away from a £2.5 billion Nigerian gas/oil project came only days after the Commonwealth heads of government, meeting in New Zealand, suspended Nigeria's membership of the 53-nation group for two years. The Commonwealth leaders warned Nigeria it would be expelled if General Sani Abacha did not institute political and human rights reforms.

Nigeria defied international clamour for clemency and executed the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other environmental activists on Friday last week. The hangings in a Port Harcourt prison prompted worldwide condemnation and demands for sanctions.

A Foreign Office spokesman said the British government had no powers at present to prevent Shell proceeding with the Nigerian gas/oil project. The Prime Minister earlier signalled that the Government might apply pressure for the deal to be dropped if it was felt the new plant would directly prop up the military regime.

A Shell spokesman insisted on Monday: "We have to be clear about who gets hurt if this deal does not go ahead. The people who will get hurt are more than 6,000 Nigerians who will be denied work in its construction and the thousands of others who would benefit in the local economy.

"It is not the present Nigerian government who will benefit because the revenues will not start to flow until the beginning of the next century. The people of the Niger delta will see real environmental benefits if it goes ahead."

The multinational holds 24 per cent of the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas Ltd (NLNG), whose board was due to meet on Wednesday to discuss whether to go ahead with the project. The Nigerian government holds 49 per cent of the joint-venture company, the Italian firm Agip holds 10 per cent, and the French producer Elf 15 per cent.

The International Finance Corporation, a subsidiary of the World Bank, has already announced it will not take up its former 2 per cent interest in the plant.

"Nigeria must be expelled, not just suspended, from the Commonwealth and subjected to immediate international sanctions. No one, of course, can be absolutely sure whether stronger action would have prevented Nigeria's leaders from flouting world opinion in such a bloody way: but it might at least have prevented General Abacha from believing that the West would merely wring its hands in ritual sorrow while retaining its strong trading links with Nigeria." — Comment, page 12

Elsewhere in London, Brussels and at the United Nations, world leaders were exploring ways to draft measures designed to isolate Nigeria which one Foreign Office spokesman described as being both "workable and effective".

European Union ambassadors were meeting in Brussels on Tuesday to consider whether the community can devise sanctions that will do more than merely freeze development aid. Britain has drawn up proposals to be presented to the Africa Working Group in Brussels. At the top of the list is a Europe-wide arms sales ban and the extension of restrictions on visas to all members of the Nigerian government and their families.

Ian Black adds from Auckland: News of the executions, carried out while most Commonwealth leaders were asleep in Auckland, delivered a body blow to the organisation.

John Major said: "I said I thought this was a fraudulent trial, a bad verdict. It has now been followed by judicial murder. I do not see how Nigeria can stay in the Commonwealth until they return to democratic government."

All nine Ogoni activists had been condemned to death after a short trial on October 31 in which they were denied their choice of defence lawyers. Mr Saro-Wiwa and the others were accused of complicity in the murder of four pro-government Ogoni chiefs in 1994.

Nigeria in the dock, page 4
Obituary, page 5
Comment, page 12

Riyadh bomb kills six at US mission

Kathy Evans in Abu Dhabi and Jonathan Freedland

THE SCOURGE of anti-American terrorism returned to the Middle East on Monday when a bomb exploded outside the offices of a United States military mission in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, killing six people and wounding more than 60. Five of the dead and half of the injured were Americans.

President Clinton, who sent more than a dozen FBI agents to Riyadh, called the attack an outrage and promised an "enormous effort" to hunt down the perpetrators. The state department said a previously unknown group calling itself the Islamic Movement for Change had claimed responsibility — along with another faction called the Tigers of the Gulf.

The US embassy in Riyadh said the American victims were four civilians and one soldier. The Saudi interior ministry said the other victim was a Filipino.

The attack was the worst overseas terrorist action against a US target since the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, in which 270 people were killed. In 1983 a suicide bombing of the US military barracks in Beirut killed 241 marines.

The US ambassador in Riyadh, Raymond Mabus, revealed that threats against the American presence in the kingdom had been received since the spring.

The Islamic Movement for Change first announced its existence last December, culminating in a communiqué which singled out "crusader forces", identified as American and British troops.

Austria	AS30	Malta	45c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 3.60	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 18
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Religious extremism is the new threat to peace

IT IS ironic that I, a Jordanian Arab, write to condemn the assassination of Rabin. Whether they like it or not, Israelis and Arabs are now united by a new bond: the future of the region. Yet Arabs and Israelis are also challenged by a mutual threat: religious extremism. Israelis and Arabs are surrounded by seas in which myopic sharks devour liberal-minded Arabs and Jews. If we, as citizens, cannot confront extremists' vile acts, we should at least distance ourselves from their actions, physically and intellectually.
Lu'Ayy Minwer Al-Rimawi,
Law Department, London School of Economics, London

IN ONE respect the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin has advanced the cause of peace in the Middle East. It has demonstrated that, at the deepest level, the historic Jewish-Muslim division no longer exists. What unites peace-lovers on either side is now so much stronger than what divides them. For both Israelis and Palestinians, the fundamental question is not "What name do you give your God?" but "Do you have peace and love in your heart?"
Jeremy and Rosemary Goring,
Lewes, East Sussex

YOUR readers may not be aware of the constant stream of hatred directed against Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres by Jewish religious extremists since the peace agreements were signed. Here is a small sample, taken from one recent issue of the New York Jewish Press.

The editors freely cast doubt on the democratic legitimacy of the government: after denouncing "the current violation of Torah principles by the government of Israel", they then claim that "the Israeli government ... conducts its affairs as a dictatorship". Columnist Gary M Cooperberg refers to "the power brokers who presume to rule over us as dictators".

The use of militaristic language is continued in a column by Yitzhak Shamir, who refers to "the war against the present policies of the government". Prof Howard L Adelson talks of "the Rabin-Peres attack on Jewish shrines", and Ron Nachman, Likud MK, Mayor of Ariel, writes ominously: "When the first victims of [the peace] agreement fall, someone will have to pay the price."

The worst abuse is left to the letters page. Writing from Jerusalem, Binyamin Lemkin refers to "the war and terror process which Rabin and Peres and Arafat are conducting".

I am not suggesting that any of these people were involved in the assassination, nor that they derived any satisfaction from it. It is obvious, though, that months of this crude invective have now taken their toll by creating a climate in which violence flourishes. By stirring up hatred and hysteria, the Jewish religious right have blood on their hands.
Raphael Salkie,
Brighton

WHY DO you say (Editorial, November 12) that the Israeli state's practice of assassinating its enemies is "a dubious proposition both in tactical and moral terms"? No one can be in any serious doubt that such a practice is murder, illegal and regarded by most sane people as morally wrong. Yitzhak Rabin's killer will no doubt say that he acted to save Israel. Rabin no doubt approved Fathi Shqaqi's murder on the same basis. Isn't it time to doubt a bit less and condemn a bit more?
John Spencer,
London

Tactical voting in Quebec

YOUR VARIOUS articles on the Quebec referendum (November 12) did not mention some peculiarities of the vote. One is that rural areas (which are predominantly Francophone) voted overwhelmingly "Yes", while the urban Francophone vote tended to be "No".

On the Island of Montreal, the "Yes" vote was 34 per cent, and even when the "ethnic" vote is factored out, the vote of Francophones was approximately 58/40 per cent against with 2 per cent of ballots spoiled. In addition, in Quebec City, which is almost entirely French, the "Yes" side won by only 3 percentage points. This suggests that the economic arguments of the federalist side were heeded by those who feared (rightly or wrongly) that the independence of Quebec would endanger their livelihoods.

In addition, the referendum question was worded in such a manner that it attracted not only avowed separatists, but also the so-called "strategic" voters. These are Quebec nationalists opposed to independence who believed that the "No" vote would prevail easily, and who voted "Yes" because they believed that it would give Quebec greater bargaining strength in future negotiations with the federal government.

If there is another referendum, it is likely that there will be major modifications of tactics employed by both sides in an attempt to secure the French vote that eluded them on October 30. Under such altered circumstances, a victory for independence is far from certain.
Campbell Perry,
Montreal, Canada

Aid givers must set tough rules

DO THE major British aid organisations really believe their own pretentious idealism, or do they deliberately obfuscate development issues to further their own ends? You report (October 15) that these agencies placed a full-page advertisement in the Times newspaper warning that cuts in British aid, amounting to £275 million, would have a devastating effect on, among other projects, reproductive health in Kenya and family planning in Pakistan.

To put these cuts in perspective one only had to turn the page of your paper and read that £166 million has been misappropriated from public funds in Kenya. As for development priorities in Pakistan, this country is set to make its biggest military deal with France: the purchase of 32 Mirage 2000S fighter aircraft at the cost of about £2 billion — nearly as much as the total British aid budget.

In Zimbabwe we experience the same bizarre sense of priorities. While a massive Z$2 billion was allocated to our Ministry of Defence, a measly Z$40 million — only one-sixth of the funding required — was budgeted for a desperately needed supplementary feeding programme for children. Instead of cutting military expenditure to feed its own people, the government uses the plight of the hapless and the starving to cajole western governments to replenish its begging bowl. According to a local newspaper report, the Zimbabwean government is now "satisfied" with the Z$1 billion pledged by international donors for food aid.

While Oxfam self-righteously lambasts World Bank economic reforms, it has remained sheepish about the devastating effect of rampant corruption and the utter waste of resources on military expenditure. Rather than asking Kenneth Clarke which British aid projects he would cut, agencies would be better advised to direct their rhetorical questions to leaders of recipient countries, whose hideous distortions in spending patterns and callous disregard for their own people should be at the top of the agenda at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Auckland.

Mr Clarke's job should be to ensure that British taxpayers' money only goes to those countries which have taken a strong stand against corruption at the highest level, whose priorities lie with development rather than defence spending, and which encourage the growth of human rights, democratic government and civil society. For their part, aid agencies should spend more time and effort encouraging fairer world trade in agricultural commodities — especially with the European Union.
Dale Doré,
Harare, Zimbabwe

Ralph will be sorely missed

WHEN I opened my Guardian Weekly last Friday and read that Ralph Whitlock had died, I wept.

The smiling young man holding the badger was one of the earliest personalities I got to know through radio, or "on the wireless", as I was growing up.

Now I'm nearly 60, and I live far from the English countryside that Ralph Whitlock taught us all so much about. So when I read of his death, it was as though some tie uniting me with my own childhood had been snapped. How much I looked forward each week to his column, which carried all the flavour of rural England.

He taught me not only to value my native countryside, but to interest myself in the details of nature wherever I happen to be, so this morning I went about feeding my sheep, goats and donkeys, and watching the nuthatches and purple finches flutter round the feeder in the cold November wind with a sharper eye and a deeper pleasure because of Ralph.
Stephanie Wenk,
Salem, New York, USA

I WAS very saddened to read of the death of Ralph Whitlock. I am sure I am not the only reader who will sorely miss his delightful contributions to your paper. Maybe my son, to whom I would often read Mr Whitlock's stories, can offer us some consolation. "But have his stories died?" he asked.

No, love, they haven't.
Delia Knight,
Alicante, Spain

Briefly

YOU REPORT (November 12) that the Queen signed legislation in New Zealand to apologise to the Maoris for land improperly taken from their ancestors and to atone as far as is now possible.

We are now drawing the Japanese government's attention to the New Zealand example of apology and are requesting, once again, that they pay compensation to its civilian and PoW victims for suffering inflicted.
K J Martin,
Association of British Civilian Internees, Northington, Hants

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ANNA STEINITZ asks (November 5): "How is it that we can locate the Titanic, put men on the moon and invent the nuclear missile, but women still can't get safe and reliable contraception?"

The answer is that they can. All modern contraceptives are a lot safer and more reliable than any of the activities she mentions.
Leszek Zietara,
Jamberoo, NSW, Australia

I WAS GOING to suggest a Million Woman March — until I realised that we women are far too busy earning a living and/or giving our husbands/partners the kind of service they could only otherwise expect in a first-class hotel; and raising our children with, often, very little help.
Helen Cox,
Porlock, England

IN HIS letter of October 22, C Chevalier of Solomon Islands says he wants to disown his French heritage by changing his name. May I point out that "Evil Reach" is an anagram of his surname that adequately sums up what many people think of French nuclear tests in the Pacific.
Sue Woodrock,
Cochabamba, Bolivia

THE SUCCESS of the UN's former Special Representative to Burundi, Ahmed Ould Abdallah, in preventing genocide "spreading north from Rwanda" ("Decline and fall of a blue empire", October 29) is complete. Burundi is to the south of Rwanda. Perhaps the error was due to "the West's promiscuous and selective attention span".
Ben Parker,
UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs,
Nairobi, Kenya

IN THE review of Oasis's concert at Earls Court (November 12) Noel Gallagher is quoted as using the word *fook*. Why is "dialect" spelling used so patronisingly? Gallagher speaks and sings in English, so quote him in Standard English.
Nigel Ayers,
Lostwithiel, Cornwall

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Israel resumes its troop withdrawal

Derek Brown in Jerusalem

ISRAEL pulled its last troops out of the West Bank town of Jenin on Sunday, marking a vital step on the road to Palestinian autonomy.

The evacuation was also a tangible signal that the government will redeem its pledge to carry on with the self-rule peace policy endorsed by the late prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin.

At the same time the government announced that it had taken the unusual step of banning a Jew identified with a "terrorist" group from entering Israel.

The name of the would-be immigrant and his nationality were not disclosed, but he was described as an activist of the outlawed Kach movement which has its main base in the United States. Israeli law officially welcomes immigrants of Jewish descent.

One of the last peace moves made by Mr Rabin, assassinated by a Jewish fundamentalist gunman in Tel Aviv on November 4, was the agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organisation to pull troops out of the six biggest towns in the West Bank by the end of the year. Jenin was the first of those towns. Nablus, Qalqilya, Bethlehem, Ramallah and Tulkarm will follow. There will also be a partial pullout from Hebron.

The Palestinian Authority headed by the PLO chairman, Yasser Arafat, will also have limited security powers in 450 West Bank villages, while Israel will retain control of about 130 Jewish settlements.

Shimon Peres, the acting prime minister, told a special memorial session of the Knesset (parliament) on Sunday: "We will keep all the commitments we have made: security for Israel and Israelis, and respect of all the principles we agreed with the Palestinians; peace with Egypt and Jordan, and seeking peace with Syria and Lebanon."

In Jenin, the final evacuation was greeted with relief and celebration. Many Palestinians believed the assassination might undermine the government's will and ability to keep to the timetable.

In the event, the pullout happened almost exactly on schedule. The last 15 Israeli Jeeps left the town's main army post just before dawn, escorted by some of the 350 or so Palestinian police who had earlier arrived from Jericho.

In Israel, attention was focused on the police investigation which has so far netted at least seven suspects in the assassination case, including Yigal Amir, the 25-year-old law student who fired the fatal shots. The police, who have imposed a virtual news blackout on developments, said on Sunday that they believed the killing was plotted by a core of three men, and that others knew of the plan.

Yigal Amir's brother Haggai, also under arrest, has said in court that the murder was sanctioned by halachic (Jewish religious) law.

Two rabbis from the occupied West Bank have denied knowing of the assassination or justifying it. Dov Lior of Kiryat Arba and Nahum Rabinovich of Ma'aleh Adumim oppose the self-rule accord. Rabbi Rabinovich told Israel Radio that the allegations against him were "utterly false. They have not the least shred of truth". He insisted that he advocated only passive opposition.

Last week, Yasser Arafat set foot in Israel proper for the first time to visit Mr Rabin's widow, Leah. He landed at Dov airport, outside Tel Aviv, and was whisked away by car to the Rabin flat in the north of the city. Mr Arafat, asked later what he had said to Mrs Rabin, replied: "That we lost a great man who made the peace of the brave with us. He was our partner and we thank you for continuing his road and his march."

● Yitzhak Rabin's name was misspelt on a sign at the square renamed Yitzhak Rabin Square in his honour after his assassination. The sign, unveiled on Sunday night at a memorial rally in the square, spelt his name in English as "Yizhaq Rabbin".


Welcome relief . . . Crowds mob Palestinian police officers arriving in Jenin on Monday PHOTOGRAPH: SANTIAGO LYON

Widow pays tribute to Rabin

ISRAEL brought a week of mourning for its slain prime minister to a climax on Sunday with a mass plea to his successor: press on with peace, *Derek Brown and Martin Woollacott report in Tel Aviv.*

Up to 250,000 people converged on the Square of the Kings of Israel, now officially renamed Yitzhak Rabin Square.

In contrast to the security shambles which cost Rabin his life, the speakers' platform was surrounded by bodyguards and police. Helicopters beamed searchlights on to the crowds and the surrounding buildings, each crusted with sharpshooters.

Leah Rabin told her murdered husband of the crowds in the square and those at the funeral in Mount Herzl National Cemetery, Jerusalem. She told him of the world leaders who had attended that funeral, of the candles that had been lit throughout the land.

"All the world has mourned you and cried over you; our whole country for a whole week has been weeping for you," she said. Many in the crowd were weeping as she called on Shimon Peres, the acting prime minister, to carry on down the road to peace "and not to stop in any circumstances".

That plea was endorsed by the vast majority of the crowd. Some, like Rachel, a social worker, aged 46, said they had been there the night Rabin was killed. "I have returned here many times. I supported him, and I support him now."

Washington Post, page 13

US clinches Slavonia peace deal

Julian Borger in Zagreb

SERBS in the breakaway region of Eastern Slavonia agreed on Sunday to accept Croat sovereignty, ending their four-year rebellion and marking the first significant achievement of the US-sponsored talks in Dayton, Ohio.

Under the agreement, the region will be administered by an international force for up to two years before being fully reintegrated into Croatia. Both sides, diplomats say, have asked for US troops.

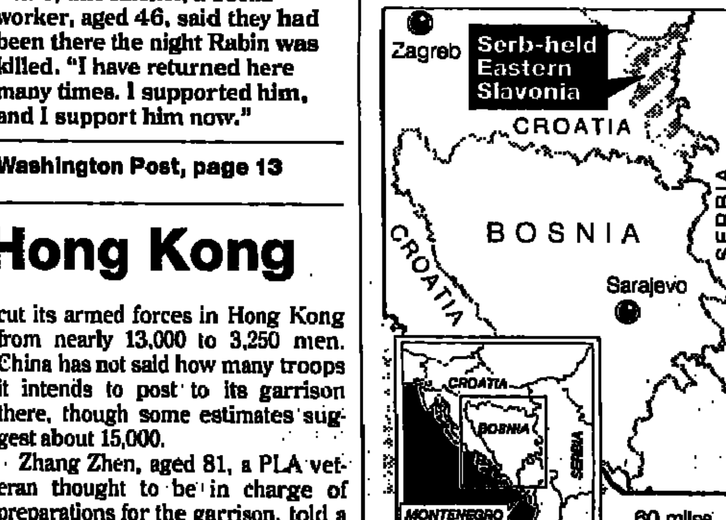
The transitional administration will oversee the demilitarisation of the region within its first month, and will encourage the return of refugees.

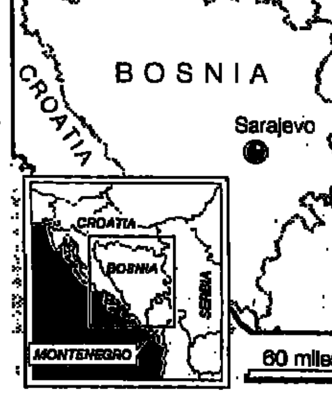
The deal followed a week of brinkmanship, during which the Serbs rejected Zagreb's peace proposals and Croat troops massed around the 20-mile-wide strip of land, threatening to retake it by force.

The US ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, said on Sunday: "For the first time in this conflict, an issue has been resolved peacefully by signatures and not by bullets."

His fellow mediator, the UN envoy Thorvald Stoltenberg, said: "I think we have experienced the start of the end of the war in ex-Yugoslavia." The signing is expected to clear the way for mutual recognition between Serbia and Croatia.

The agreement was signed first by the Croat Serb leader, Milan Milanovic, in the Slavonian town of Erdut and then rushed by road to Zagreb, 110 miles to the west, for signature by the Croat government. But the deal was shaped in Dayton, by the Croat president Franjo Tudjman and his Serbian counterpart, Slobodan Milosevic.





● Russia is to send 2,000 combat troops to Bosnia under American command, to help Nato implement a future peace settlement there.

If Russia and the US can agree on an overall system of political control for peace implementation in Bosnia, it will be the first time Russian troops serve alongside Nato and under US command. In a deal reached on Sunday, Moscow insisted on a complex arrangement to ensure none of its soldiers come under direct Nato command. Instead the Russian troops will take orders from Nato's American supreme military commander, General George Julwan.

Washington Post, page 13

N-test stance angers Major

JOHN MAJOR furiously dissociated Britain last week from a Commonwealth statement condemning nuclear testing, even though in a remarkable feat of diplomacy the document did not mention France's controversial blasts in the south Pacific, *writes Ian Black in Auckland.*

In the Commonwealth statement, negotiated long and hard throughout the first day of the Auckland summit, heads of government "noted the widespread anger caused by the current programmes of nuclear weapon tests".

But Mr Major, replaying Margaret Thatcher's many spats with Commonwealth colleagues, said: "I think what they say in their statement is factually inaccurate, intellectually inconsistent and unbalanced. I haven't signed up for that and they know it. I've made it perfectly clear: I think the view that has been expressed by our Commonwealth colleagues is just plain wrong, just plain wrong."

China presses for army in Hong Kong

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

CHINA is demanding that Britain allow the People's Liberation Army to start moving troops into Hong Kong before the territory reverts to Chinese rule and the last colonial forces pull out in 600 days, senior British sources said last week.

Beijing argues that the arrival of some PLA units before Britain's final retreat from empire would avoid both a security vacuum and the shock of large-scale troop movements when the Union flag comes down at midnight on June 30 1997.

In preliminary discussions by the Joint Liaison Group, a Sino-British body set up to oversee the transition, Britain has rejected all but a token PLA presence before 1997.

"It has always been a possibility that they would want to bring in a few people in advance," a British official said. "But the Chinese want to have many more than we are ready to allow . . . We will not be pushed around on this."

The demand has stirred fears of an attempt by Beijing to establish a substantial pre-handover military presence in Hong Kong, parallel to a shadow government already taking shape. China is due to name Hong Kong's post-colonial governor, to be known as the chief executive, next year. Considerable power has already been transferred to Beijing-appointed advisory bodies.

But while many in Hong Kong have come to terms with the political shift, most are anxious about the army's future role. Under an agreement reached last year, China will take over 14 defence sites in 1997, including British military headquarters in the Prince of Wales building, a high-rise office block in the central business district.

The post-1997 constitution — the Beijing-drafted Basic Law — promises PLA troops will "not interfere in local affairs". But China's leader, Deng Xiaoping, has warned that Beijing would use military force in the event of "turmoil" — the same term used to define the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy rallies.

In the past decade, Britain has cut its armed forces in Hong Kong from nearly 13,000 to 3,250 men. China has not said how many troops it intends to post to its garrison there, though some estimates suggest about 15,000.

Zhang Zhen, aged 81, a PLA veteran thought to be in charge of preparations for the garrison, told a pro-Beijing Hong Kong newspaper that the selection and training of "crack troops" for the territory was well underway.

In a sign of the PLA's eagerness to take over, its future commander in Hong Kong, General Liu Zhenwu, is reported to have attended an Army Day military rally just over the border in Shenzhen on August 1. Britain, meanwhile, continues to pare down its last important colonial military outpost. A battalion of Gurkhas is due to leave next November. Other units will follow, leaving a squadron of helicopters and a few naval patrol boats.

China's military presence is at present limited to a small staff of PLA experts seconded to the Joint Liaison Group.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 19 1995

Why the generals feared Saro-Wiwa

Chris McGreal in Lagos

OF ALL those dragged before General Sani Abacha's kangaroo courts few unnerved Nigeria's military dictatorship as much as Ken Saro-Wiwa.

The writer turned environmental crusader against Shell's abuse of his native Ogoniland was an unlikely threat. Saro-Wiwa was in no position to plot coups or organise nationwide strikes, activities for which former military ruler General Olusegun Obasanjo and others are jailed. He did not claim to be president, which is why Moshood Abiola is locked away awaiting trial for treason and a possible death sentence.

Saro-Wiwa's political base was limited to a thumbprint on the map of Nigeria — Ogoniland, whose people account for just half of one per cent of the country's population. Yet when Gen Abacha weighed up the consequences of execution with appeals and threats from around the world, he saw Saro-Wiwa as peril enough to barely hesitate to dispatch him and eight others to the gallows.

To Gen Abacha the danger lurks within Nigeria, not from international isolation.

The Ogonis' defiance posed one of the most serious challenges to Nigeria's power structure since the Biafran war because it was an example of effective organised resistance that could not be quelled with money or threats. It also raised the spectre of separatism in a country of 250 ethnic groups. And it touched one of the army's rawest nerves — its source of cash.

Saro-Wiwa channelled Ogoni anger at three decades of exploitation of their lands by Shell with little to show for the billions of dollars made by polluted fields, gas flares and pipelines scarring villages. The company was callous in its treatment of the Ogonis despite its belated efforts to clean up its image.

When Shell was forced out of Ogoniland in 1993, the army lost a slice of its pie. Nigeria's military rulers met the challenge with their tested tactics of violence and co-option. Since 1993, the army and police have descended on Ogoniland, slaughtering villagers and blaming the killings on ethnic rivalries. The government bought off village chiefs in the hope they would keep their subjects in line. The strategy backfired.

Claude Ake, a mediator in the conflict, says that for the first time the military was confronted by a popular movement it was unable to subvert.

"Ogoni was the most fundamental challenge to the Nigerian system it had seen. It is important to some people that this does not work because there has been no instance where people have been so mobilised for a cause. Ogoni is the only place in Nigeria where you can go where there is no possibility of winning an election by corruption."

Yet if Saro-Wiwa was anything to other Nigerians it was as an example, not a cause. While his struggle struck a chord with the Ibos in eastern Nigeria, they remember with bitterness Saro-Wiwa's role within the federal government against their own ill-fated struggle to control their resources and destiny through the separatist Biafran state.

And while there was admiration for his stand, his pursuit of Ogoni interests sometimes at the expense of the quest for broader democratic change in Nigeria deprived him of more active backing beyond his own people.

Above all, while most Nigerians do not believe Saro-Wiwa ordered the deaths of the four Ogoni traditional chiefs he was accused of conspiring to kill, there is much debate over whether he helped create a climate which made the killings possible. His Mosop movement routinely denigrated chiefs as "vultures" and some in its youth wing were said to be increasingly thuggish and out of control.

Gen Abacha bowed to international pressure to spare the lives of Gen Obasanjo and other alleged coup plotters earlier this year. He was determined it should not be interpreted as weakness. Saro-Wiwa proved the point.



Ken Saro-Wiwa: 'I accuse the oil companies in Ogoni of encouraging genocide against the Ogoni people' PHOTOGRAPH: TIM STOCKHILL/REX

Ogoni leader's final words

IN ONE of his last television interviews, Ken Saro-Wiwa accused multinational oil companies of racism and appealed for international help for the Ogoni people.

"I've been [campaigning] for 20 years and at this age there's really nothing to fear. I think we've seen a lot of dictators collapse in the past and these ones are going to collapse as well.

"I accuse the ethnic majority who run Nigeria of practising genocide against the Ogoni people. I accuse the oil companies who prospect for oil in Ogoni of encouraging genocide against the Ogoni people.

"I accuse [them] of practising racism against the Ogoni people. I appeal to the international community who buy oil from Nigeria to come to the aid of the Ogoni people and stop this genocide.

"I would like to appeal to the United Nations to come to the aid of the Ogoni now, to stop this genocide. Because if nothing is done today in 10 years time the Ogoni people will be extinct."

Trade gives big business few qualms

David Pallister, Mark Milner and Dan Atkinson

ANY proposal for non-oil trade sanctions against Nigeria runs up against the reality that, despite the parlous state of its economy and its £23 billion external debt, multinational corporations are making huge profits there — which increased by 75 per cent last year.

Britain, the largest seller of industrial exports to Nigeria, enjoyed a healthy surplus of £333 million last year. Although some big British companies, including ICI and Wellcome, have disinvested, others such as Guinness, Cadbury, Paterson Zochonis and Lever Brothers prosper. British investment is estimated at about £3.4 billion.

The French have been enthusiastic players in recent years and rank second only to the US, with 20 per cent of foreign investment. They lead in a number of areas, such as tyres from Michelin, Peugeot cars, Bouygues Offshore, the oil field contractor, and Julius Berger the construction giant.

Freezing bank deposits would hit the regime. Nigerian deposits with banks in London total £1.68 billion compared with UK bank lending to Nigerian entities of £300 million

"Going for countries' assets is far more effective than going for their debts," said one banking insider.

However, any freeze on Nigerian bank accounts would almost certainly be carried out under Britain's United Nations Act, which would require a Security Council resolution.

Another possibility would be to freeze assets held abroad by members of the junta. But this would be an enormous task, according to a British banker who is involved in investigating money laundering.

He named a central London branch of a leading British bank as the main recipient: "We call it the wishy-washy bank. Nigerians have laundered millions of pounds through London for years, but the beneficial owners are always well disguised."

John Major's announcement at the weekend of a tightened arms embargo is unlikely to affect current contracts. Vickers is selling 80 tanks costing £150 million. Last year 18 were delivered to the junta's armoured regiments — the backbone of the army and guarantor of military power.

The World Development Movement said it would be pressing Mr Major to make the embargo retrospective, hitting the Vickers order and ensuring that non-lethal and dual-use equipment is banned.

Only sanctions will restore sanity

COMMENT
Ad'Obe Obe

IF THE current momentum of international opinion against Nigeria is sustained, Ken Saro-Wiwa may posthumously achieve his final ambition — to force soldiers out of leadership in Nigeria.

Saro-Wiwa had concluded that the military were now behaving more like an occupation army than professionals trained in disciplined leadership. His call for the Republic of Ogoni arose from his quarrel with the thugs in uniform who steadily pocketed the proceeds of the natural wealth extracted from Ogoni soil. He was campaigning to be elected to the constituent assembly convened by General Sani Abacha. He shared the view of writer Chinua Achebe that there is nothing wrong with Nigerians, only with their leadership ("Nigeria is a great country made small by little leaders").

The only conceivable explanation for the execution of Saro-Wiwa in defiance of international protest is that Abacha has become power-drunk after his apparent success in neutralising internal opposition. Abacha could have calculated that detaining Chief Abiola and sentencing General Olusegun Obasanjo were more serious offences in the eyes of the international community.

Insanity is a word often used by Nigerians to describe their socio-political conditions. General Obasanjo once said: "If Nigeria were an individual, he would have long been certified insane and locked up."

The most effective weapon in General Abacha's hand today is a national psyche accustomed to the absence of any principles, other than personal greed, as motivation for leadership. The man credited with shaping that psyche and using it very successfully is General Ibrahim Babangida. He introduced the politics of settlement: he gave vocal Nigerians what they wanted — mostly money — while he kept control of Nigerian politics for eight years of "programmes of transition to democracy".

Nigerians woke up too late to discover that he had no intention of leaving office and they had so compromised themselves with him that there was little they could do about it. Only accidentally did an election he had arranged to abort produce a result that checkmated him. Today, he is not only a free man, but is also believed to be regularly in touch with his erstwhile number two — now head of state General Abacha. Abacha is sitting on a report into the alleged disappearance of $12 billion of oil money in Babangida's years. To ordinary Nigerians, all this is perfectly normal.

Babangida's legacy to Abacha is this: everyone has a price — and Nigerian politicians are cheap. At first, Nigerians believed there was hope when Abacha appointed as ministers many of those who had dared to oppose Babangida and acquired the reputation of radical thinkers. He allowed them to make noises about policy, allocated them money to award contracts, and then fixed them after 18 months during which he formally met with them less than half a dozen times. The nation did not miss them, nor did Abacha.

Abacha conferred with Chief Abiola before assuming power; it is said that he "settled" Abiola with the huge sum Babangida had paid in connection with his withdrawn claim to the presidency won in the annulled elections. Some believe that Abiola was promised the presidency. In spite of a vocal pro-Abiola movement, many Nigerians think his present detention is less martyrdom than the result of a falling-out with Abacha.

An African diplomat who witnessed the scene in Lagos said Nigerian history would have completely changed had there been someone to lead the opposition. It was a major disappointment that Chief Abiola absconded to London just when history most needed him.

Right now, Abiola's main success is in internationalising Nigerian politics, a rare phenomenon since the end of the Biafran war.

Until now, international opinion was slow to appreciate the plight of Nigerian exiles; they were fiercely proud, and so resented outside opinion, that the steady deterioration in their country went largely unreported. International opinion is now likely to be the only effective opposition to the present regime.

Trade sanctions against Nigerian oil would hurt most; damage to ordinary Nigerians would be marginal. Benefits from oil revenues (90 per cent of foreign exchange earnings) have hardly been reaching most Nigerians, whose incomes have been so eroded by inflation that many face starvation, as well as hospitals without drugs, and other basic amenities. Loss of oil money will be most felt in the generals' pockets, or in their overseas bank accounts.

Ad'Obe Obe is a former editor of West Africa magazine

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Courageous campaign of a writer

Ken Saro-Wiwa

IT IS a supreme irony that the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Nigerian environmental activist, businessman and writer, at the age of 54 should have come in such a grotesque manner: tried and condemned by a tribunal instead of an ordinary court of law, denied the right of appeal, and hanged. Nothing about his origins nor, indeed, the course of most of his life, indicated even remotely that things would come to this terrible pass.

Saro-Wiwa was born in Bori, near Port Harcourt, capital of Rivers State in Nigeria. He was a brilliant student, and government scholarships saw him through Government College, Umuahia, and the University of Ibadan — two famous institutions which some other notable Nigerian writers, including Chinua Achebe, had also attended.

He taught briefly at the universities of Ibadan and Nigeria (at Nsukka) before the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war in 1967. Stridently anti-Biafran (until his death he wrote the name with a lower case "b"), Saro-Wiwa pitched his camp with the federal authorities. He was appointed the administrator of the oil port of Bonny, and in 1968 became one of the first cabinet members in the newly created Rivers State, where he alternately held the powerful portfolios of education and information.

Out of government, Saro-Wiwa turned to business, which he ran alongside his real love of writing. He made good on both scores. He could afford to send his son to Eton; and had to his credit more than 20 titles in all genres of literature.

There are four novels, a poetry volume, two books of short stories, three titles on general topics, two drama volumes, one on folklore and nine children's books. And this output does not include the extensive pamphleteering on behalf of the Ogoni cause. His Tambari and Tambari In Dukana, both written for children, were published by Longman.

All the others are published by his Saros International Publishers. Last year, Longman reissued his Sozaboy: A Novel In Rotten English, which received an honourable mention at the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa. Only last month the same publishers reissued A Forest Of Flowers, his first collection of short stories which was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize in 1987.

Saro-Wiwa was also at different times an engaging newspaper columnist for Punch, Vanguard and the Daily Times, all Lagos-based dailies. Whether in journalism or in creative writing, he exposed a nation "cracking up under the pressures of maladministration, corporate greed, sloth, ignorance and mercenary self-interest, while its people struggle against government neglect and abuse, racketeering, poverty, disease, superstition and ethnic mistrust" — to quote the apposite comment on the blurb accompanying A Forest Of Flowers.

Sometime in 1991, Saro-Wiwa decided to abandon "everything" and devote himself to the Ogoni struggle, which until then he had combined with his other activities.

Towards the end of 1992 he was struck by tragedy when his son at Eton dropped dead during a game of rugby. Something inside Saro-Wiwa seemed to have died as a result. From then on he lived only for the Ogoni struggle.

Before long he complained that the military authorities had turned a deaf ear to the demands of his people. He said the only option left was to attract the attention of the international community. In July 1992 he addressed the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva and followed this up with a visit to the UN in New York.

He began recording scenes of oil pollution and gas flaring in Ogoniland. Using the platform of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, which he helped found, he sensitised his people to the politics and economics of oil.

Greenpeace and other environmental groups soon took up the Ogoni case and picketing of Shell offices in London became commonplace. Saro-Wiwa had become an acute embarrassment to oil companies operating in Nigeria and to his country's military rulers.

During his last visit to London in May last year he complained that Shell had put a worldwide surveillance on his movements. He said it was obvious that the military regime in Nigeria was feeling the heat of the Ogoni struggle.

Shortly after his return to Nigeria he was charged with multiple murder, although it was established that he was not at the scene of the killings. But Justice Ibrahim Auta, the tribunal chairman, warned: "If an accused was not directly involved in a crime, he could still be convicted if he encouraged the act." And the tribunal is empowered to pronounce only capital punishment.

So, the Nigerian state has killed Ken Saro-Wiwa. The man I knew, the one who was my friend for more than a decade, who believed in combat — the combat of the written and spoken word. If he opposed anything, he went to great lengths to leave nobody in doubt as to where he stood. Perhaps his eternal mistake was that he chose to rail at those who saw themselves in superhuman terms, people who would brook no opposition.

But he always insisted that the Ogoni would demand their rights peacefully. He showed impatience each time it was alleged that he was planning for the Ogoni to secede. "I am not a fool," he would declare. "The Ogoni are only 500,000. Nigeria is about 100 million."

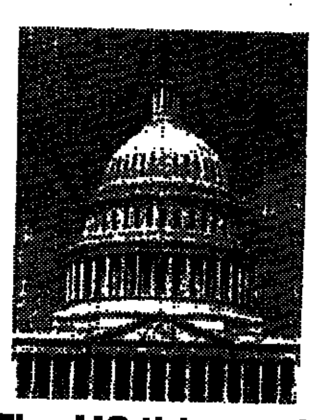
Somebody wanted to know the meaning of Saro-Wiwa's death. Simple. It means that nothing has changed.

He is survived by his wife, Hauwa, his children, one of whom, Ken, has been the foremost campaigner for his father's freedom, and his father and mother, aged 91 and 75 respectively.

Chuks Iloegbunam

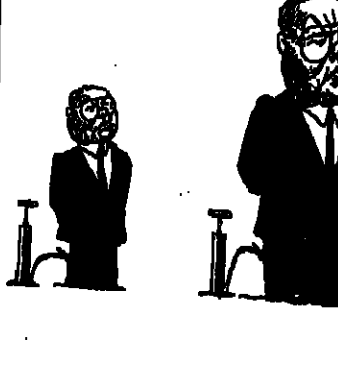
Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa, writer and environmentalist, born October 10, 1941; died November 10, 1995

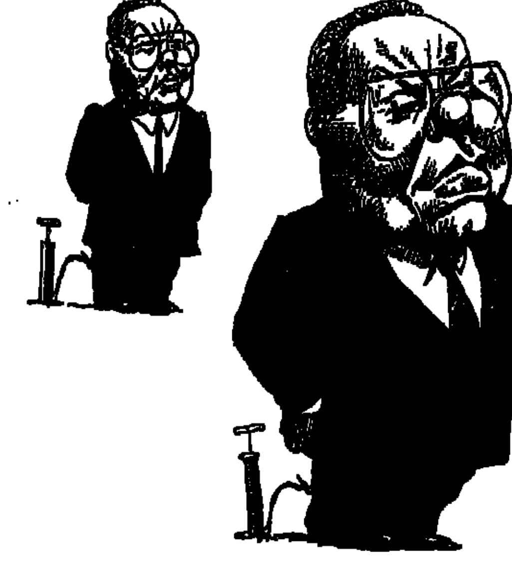
Powell doubts the force is with him



The US this week

Martin Walker





COLIN POWELL'S decision not to contest the 1996 presidential elections was made, he insists, as he woke up on the morning before the assassination of Israel's prime minister Yitzhak Rabin. Even before that reminder of his wife's constant worries about a black president's vulnerability to a nut with a gun, Powell decided he did not have the stomach for the presidential race. And most observers have taken him at his word: that he lacked the essential fire in the belly for the gruelling business of running, and for the job itself.

Powell put an honourable and high-minded gloss on this decision, but there was a whiff of Vietnam in the air. Powell was part of a generation of mid-ranking army officers who learned in Vietnam to shrink from any war they could not be sure of winning. The Powell rules of military engagement, as deployed at the Pentagon, required overwhelming force and overwhelming firepower, full public and congressional support, a clear political goal, an obvious way out, and victory guaranteed.

Understandably after Vietnam, these rules imposed strategic timidity on the world's last superpower, and that timidity now appears to have a domestic political dimension as well. Once again, it may be said, General Powell has judiciously avoided a final battle with the Republican Guard. He did not relish a messy struggle, in which much mud would have been slung with no assurance of glory at the end.

So that American constitutional curiosity, of a head of state who is also the political leader, a partisan chieftain who must also be the symbol of the nation as a whole, came into play once more. Bill Clinton is almost tailor-made for the political job, but does not impress as head of state. Colin Powell would have been a marvellous symbol of the values and aspirations of the American mix, but a risky choice as party political leader.

The conventional wisdom now assumes that next year's presidential election will be between two crafty and professional politicians, Bill Clinton and Senator Robert Dole. On the day Powell stepped out of the race, Dole picked up the important endorsement of New Hampshire's governor, Steve Merrill. This should reinforce his lead over his Republican rivals in the first primary state.

All eyes now turn to Florida, where the 3,500 delegates to the state Republican convention are holding a straw poll this week to express the preferences of the party activists. This will be the most important guide to the Republican pecking order until the primary season begins in February.

Not only are prestige and momentum at stake in Florida, but also a great wave of campaign funding, delayed to see what Powell would do. The bulk will probably, and rather resignedly, go to Dole, whose campaign staff are confident they can get the 40 per cent of the vote required to buttress his status as front-runner. The three-month hiatus, as America waited for Powell to make up his mind, locked up potential funds for Dole's rivals, and robbed their campaigns of much of the publicity as they trailed through New Hampshire and Iowa.

After walking across the state of New Hampshire in his tartan shirt, and making his genial personality known to vast numbers of voters, Lamar Alexander ought to be doing much better than he is. Senator Phil Gramm of Texas should by now have turned his massive war chest into a lock on the conservative vote. Senator Arlen Spector should have rallied the remnants of liberal Republicanism to his banner, but instead is pondering withdrawal.

The only Republican to have turned Powell's 100 days of quasi-candidacy to his advantage is the one who threatened to fight rather than let Powell's soft centrism infect the party: Pat Buchanan. Last month, this rightwing firebrand and "America First" nationalist was running second to Dole in New Hampshire with 10 per cent. Last week he had 17 per cent, with Dole down to 27 per cent.

Most conservatives loathe the United Nations, but like Senators Dole and Gramm they feel a lingering responsibility for American leadership and American commitments overseas. Buchanan will have none of this, and affronts the party's free-market and free-trade instincts by demanding protection for American jobs and an end to US membership of the World Trade Organisation.

"When I am elected President of the United States, there will be no more Nafta sellout of American workers. There will be no more Gatt deals done for the benefit of Wall Street bankers. And there will be no more $50 billion bail-outs of Third World socialists," Buchanan vowed when he announced his bid.

Molly Ivens, the Texan liberal commentator, put it best when she noted that Buchanan's speeches "sound better in the original German". There is a distinct note of American fascism in this militant Catholic, brought up by a father whose heroes were General Franco and Senator Joe McCarthy. His happiest boyhood memories are of joining an anti-communist church youth club called "the Pope's Marines".

Even without the Watergate scandal, there was a dark, authoritarian spirit at the heart of Richard Nixon's White House, telling the most discredited of presidents that it was time for a "purging of the disloyal and the recalcitrant" in the civil service. It was the same voice which urged Nixon to "move to get political control of the Internal Revenue Service" and use it as a weapon against his enemies.

Nixon would find it "a tragedy to fritter away his present high support in the nation for an ill-advised governmental effort to forcibly integrate races," said Buchanan, the most loyal Nixonite of them all.

AS A young editorial writer on a paper in St Louis in 1966, Buchanan learned that Nixon was considering another run at the presidency. With a bad knee keeping him out of the Vietnam draft, and some fuss with his editor over swallowing FBI "guidance" about Martin Luther King being a communist, Buchanan applied to be Nixon's personal aide. Speech-writer, political adviser, bag carrier and travel agent, he spent up to four hours a day with Nixon and went with him to the White House.

Buchanan married Nixon's receptionist, Shelley Scarney, a delightful woman who has given him an even emotional keel. But she has not changed his views. Buchanan shrugs aside suggestions that his incendiary speech about "cultural war" at the 1992 Republican convention helped lose George Bush the election. Far from it, he insists. He may have lost that battle, but he has won the war for the soul of the Republican party, and he has brought the same fiery rhetoric to his renewed presidential campaign.

"Today in too many of our schools our children are being robbed of their innocence. Their minds are being poisoned against their Judaeo-Christian heritage, against America's heroes and against American history, against the values of faith and family and country," he declaims.

"Today's American culture — movies, television, magazines, music — is polluted with lewdness and violence. Old institutions and symbols of a heroic and tragic past . . . are all under assault. This campaign to malign America's heroes and defile America's past has as its end to turn America's children against what their parents believe and against what we love. I will use the bully pulpit of the presidency of the United States to defend American traditions and the values of faith, family and country from any and all directions."

Buchanan's vision of Fortress America already appears to offer the strongest challenge to Bob Dole's inheritance of the Republican nomination. And Buchanan has a private theory that his protectionist views will do even better in a general election than in the Republican primaries, winning ethnic white working-class votes that have traditionally gone Democrat.

This theory is based in part on the current political difficulties of a Canada torn by Quebec separatism, and a Mexico whose currency was collapsing again last week at a rate of 5 per cent a day. Mexico and Canada are the US's partners in the North American Free Trade Agreement, allowing Buchanan to deploy the slogan, "Join Nafta and die".

It is too early to predict a Dole-Buchanan war for the Republican nomination, which would be the most vicious of all the battles on the right to which the party now seems condemned through the primaries. But Republicans have a curious tradition, that when they think they are going to lose anyway, they prefer to lose with an extremist who has won their conservative hearts. This is what happened in 1964 when they picked Barry Goldwater, and in their current despondent mood, they may just do it again.

Republicans look at the polls which routinely show Clinton beating Dole by a clear 10-point margin, and privately despair. They feel they ought to win, that Clinton is just as likely to be a one-term president as his fellow Southern Democrat, Jimmy Carter. But now they find themselves stuck with an old and glumly familiar Washington politician, the Republican equivalent of Walter Mondale, who went down to predictable defeat against Ronald Reagan in 1984.

DOLE, aged 72, is in his fourth decade as a Washington insider, and a famous trimmer whose grip of political principle has long been enfeebled by years of pragmatism. "Senator Straddle", Bush sneered at him in the 1988 primary in New Hampshire, which was almost as good a jibe as Bush's "voodoo economics" in the 1980 primaries against Reagan. Dole was "the tax collector for the welfare state", Newt Gingrich used to sneer in the 1980s. When supply-side theory was the ruling orthodoxy in Reagan's White House. Dole used to enjoy telling a cruel joke about supply-side economists. The good news was that a busload of them ran over a cliff; the bad news was that there were four empty seats.

That was the old Bob Dole. The new Bob Dole boasts to conservative audiences how he was one of the handful of true believers who voted against Lyndon Johnson's socialistic health reforms of the 1960s. Had America listened to Dole in 1966, there would have been no Medicare to cut in 1995.

The new Bob Dole says, "I'll be Ronald Reagan if that's what you want," when what he means is that he wants to re-enact the electoral strategy of Richard Nixon. Shortly before his death, Nixon advised Dole to run to the right to win the Republican nomination, and then race back to the centre to win the election.

Dole's readiness to a "straddle" has been reinforced by last week's off-year elections, in which the revolutionary momentum of the Republicans' Gingrich wing has been sharply slowed. The Republicans kept the governorship of Mississippi, and will probably win the governorship of Louisiana in the run-off, but they failed to capture Kentucky.

They also, despite extraordinary efforts, failed to capture either House of the Virginia legislature. The Democrats won back three seats in the New Jersey legislature, and for a party which had begun to fear it was facing extinction, these were heartening signs of recovery.

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Lubbers forced to abandon Nato race

Julie Wolf in Brussels

THE former Dutch prime minister, Ruud Lubbers, abandoned the race for the job of Nato secretary-general last week after the US refused to support him, setting off a scramble to find another candidate.

The Dutch foreign minister, Hans van Mierlo, announced that his government was withdrawing the candidacy of Mr Lubbers, making little attempt to conceal bruised feelings in The Hague. "The United States has let it been known that it will not support Lubbers's candidacy," he said. "The Netherlands has put forward its best. If that's not good enough, then it's over."

The public transatlantic bickering about Lubbers's candidacy could make it hard to find a compromise figure; particularly given Congress's pressure on the Clinton administration to defend US interests. Washington apparently felt that Europe was trying to force Lubbers on the US. American officials hit back with hints that Lubbers had not performed well at an "interview" with the US secretary of state, Warren Christopher.

The decision left Denmark's former foreign minister, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, as the only declared candidate for the post that became vacant when the former Belgian foreign minister, Willy Claes, resigned three weeks ago.

The Week

GERMANY'S lower house of parliament demanded that Iran's foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, be banned from an Islamic conference in the country because Tehran welcomed the assassination of the Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin.

SEVEN long-term HIV survivors in Australia might hold a weapon in the war against Aids, according to a report in the US journal Science Today. They received infected blood transfusions between 1981 and 1985 but have remained healthy.

A BRITON, John Martin Scripps, aged 35, became the first westerner to be sentenced to hang for murder in Singapore, after a court convicted him of killing a South African tourist.

INDIA rejected plans to hold elections in the troubled state of Jammu and Kashmir next month, claiming fair polls were not possible in the state where a separatist rebellion has been going on for five years.

THE AGA KHAN, one of the world's richest men and spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims, lost his battle to prevent his former wife selling jewels given to her as part of their divorce settlement. The "Beghum Blue" diamond necklace was sold for $7 million in Geneva.

A NIGERIA Airways plane with 130 people aboard crashed on landing in northern Nigeria. At least 77 people were presumed dead.

INDONESIA'S President Suharto said that 21 East Timorese in the Japanese embassy in Jakarta would not be stopped from seeking asylum in Portugal.

ISRAELI aircraft raided radical Palestinian guerrilla targets south of Beirut. Two guerrillas were reported killed.

A PARIS COURT sentenced Christian Didier, aged 51, to 10 years in prison for killing the former head of France's wartime Vichy police force.

FRANCESCO Musotto, one of Silvio Berlusconi's senior lieutenants in Sicily, was arrested on a charge of Mafia conspiracy. The former head of the provincial government of Palermo and a leading member of Mr Berlusconi's rightwing Forza Italia movement, was accused of having helped Italy's most wanted man, Leoluca Bagarella.

TWO French first world war veterans died of joy after hearing they were to receive the Legion of Honour to mark the 77th anniversary of the end of the war.

Chirac accused of sexist purge

Paul Webster in Paris

PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac last week prepared France for severe government spending cuts by reshuffling his cabinet and cutting back its size.

The sacking of eight women among the 13 dismissed ministers was described as a sexist purge by feminists, irritated by reports that the prime minister, Alain Juppé, told Mr Chirac that he could no longer work with *pétasses*, a patronising term roughly translated as old biddies. There are now only four women in the 32-member government.

The dismissals reflected his administration's readiness to turn its back on social reforms promised in Mr Chirac's May presidential campaign. Most innovative changes had been allotted to women such as the sacked health minister, Elisabeth Hubert.

But the president warned more sacrifices would be needed to maintain a strong franc policy when he met the new 32-member cabinet. "We can only fight against unemployment if we fight vigorously against budget deficits and public debt," he said.

He confirmed that his campaign promise that government spending would be increased to create jobs had been ditched, in favour of the monetarist policies of Edouard Balladur's former Gaullist-led government. Mr Juppé, whose six-month-old government was the shortest since 1958, is to seek a vote of confidence this week.

Internal cabinet quarrelling over an economic U-turn appeared the main reason for the reshuffle undertaken against the background of a potential revolt among the rightwing parliamentary majority.

Mr Juppé's decision to rely mainly on male ministers, who kept their key posts, has confirmed his reputation as a politician unable to handle internal opposition.

As the three-day parliamentary debate on welfare reforms began on Monday, government plans to save the social security system from collapse were challenged by Mr Balladur. The debate took place against the background of Tuesday's national protest by trade unions who fear for the future of the 50-year-old welfare system.

Although Mr Balladur's closest adviser, the former budget minister Nicolas Sarkozy, said a powerful Balladur lobby in parliament would not try to bring the government down, they appeared ready to oppose the key measure in the planned reforms — a special tax to pay off accumulated losses of about £30 billion, including a record £8 billion this year.

Le Monde, page 17

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Appeal Court denounces government conspiracy

GOVERNMENT ministers were criticised by the Appeal Court for "material irregularity" in withholding documents vital to the defence of four men who, as a result, were forced to plead guilty to unlawfully supplying arms to Iraq.

The court quashed the 1992 convictions of the men — Paul Grecian, Bryan Mason, Stuart Black and Colin Phillips — who had been charged with conspiring to export an assembly line for heavy artillery shell fuses to Iraq by using false documents showing the "end user" of the equipment to be Jordan.

Evidence since given to the Scott inquiry into arms sales has shown that the Government knew that Jordan was being used as a conduit for the supply of arms to Iraq, but did nothing to stop the trade. But documents that would have revealed the Government's knowledge were suppressed at the 1992 trial by gagging orders known as Public Interest Immunity (PII) certificates.

Besides being a director of a military arms firm, Ordtec, Mr Grecian was actually a Special Branch and MI6 informer and, far from being a conspirator, was conspired against. Before his trial, Whitehall leaned on him, threatening to expose his dealings with the intelligence services in an unfavourable light and warning him of reprisals from the Iraqis and terrorist groups.

The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, said the four had been placed under intense pressure "to go quietly". On being denied the evidence that might have cleared them, they changed their pleas to guilty. They now plan to sue for compensation and, possibly, malicious prosecution.

The gagging certificates were signed by Peter Lilley (then at the Department of Trade) and Kenneth Baker (then Home Secretary). Mr Lilley, who is still a cabinet minister, faced Labour and Liberal Democrat demands that he should resign.

Mr Lilley suffered another setback after an extract from his correspondence revealed that he has been filled with despair by Treasury plans to cut his social security department's running costs. Labour cited the extract as a further sign of the lurch to the right within the Conservative party.

THE Defence Ministry's failure to take the so-called Gulf War Syndrome more seriously was strongly criticised by the all-party Commons Defence Committee, which demanded an independent health study of the veterans of the conflict.

The committee made no judgment on whether the elusive syndrome exists, or whether the 680 British veterans who are pursing claims against the ministry should be compensated in advance of legal proof of the cause of their ailments. But it did demand a study of the "cocktail" of inoculations and drugs given to British and American troops as a protection against chemical and biological warfare.

French troops, who did not receive such treatment, have shown no sign of the illnesses complained of by British and US troops. The committee compared the "scepticism, defensiveness and torpor" of the defence ministry with the "compassion" of the Clinton administration, which is spending more than £100 million on research and treatment.

SPECULATION that the Chancellor may scrap inheritance tax sent tremors through galleries around the country, fearful that a source of art treasures could run dry.

The owners of more then 14,000 works are exempted from estate duty on condition that they allow public access to their paintings and antiques. Most choose to do so by placing them in galleries and museums, though some keep their treasures at home and allow people to see them there by arrangement.

Without the incentive of tax relief, important works of art might, in future, remain behind closed doors.

THE BBC was accused by one of its most senior foreign correspondents of "glamorising war" by failing to show the real pain and bloodshed of the battlefield. Martin Bell, who has just finished an assignment in Bosnia, said that the cutting out of disturbing scenes in an act of self-censorship had the effect of making war "seem an acceptable way of settling disputes".

Mr Bell is not alone in his concern about the results of the BBC's growing sensitivity to public criticism. Melvyn Bragg, a prolific arts broadcaster and writer, also complained that Britain's was already the most regulated television in the free world and that its viewers were in danger of being "nannied back into the pram" by the BBC's readiness to placate politicians.

ELECTION planning by Tories was plunged into disarray when John Colver resigned from his job as communications director at Conservative Central Office after only six months, pleading his unsuitability for the post which, he said, called for more of a political propagandist.

He then confirmed his "unsuitability" by savaging his ex-employers in a newspaper article headed "Why do Tories always snatch defeat from the jaws of victory?" He said the Conservatives behaved as though as they were "in office by divine right" and that the Government, instead of making a dramatic comeback after John Major's reelection as leader, had instead developed a "siege mentality".



Chelsea pensioners join veterans in the march-past at the Cenotaph on Sunday PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK MARTIN

Huge crowds revive Remembrance parade

John Ezard

A RECORD 10,000 veterans watched by crowds 12 deep turned out for Sunday's Remembrance parade at the Cenotaph in London, crowning a weekend of public participation on a scale not seen for decades.

The crowd support, clearly swelled by the VE and VJ Day commemorations this year, came close to matching two memories from history: the turnouts at the end of the second world war and the inaugural Cenotaph service 75 years ago, when the custom of a national two-minute silence on the anniversary of the first world war armistice was introduced.

The voluntary revival of this long-disused custom at 11am on Saturday was honoured sporadically but by hundreds of thousands of people across the country. Tills stopped ringing in shops, 24,000 national lottery outlets paused in their sales and buses pulled into the roadside.

In Bosnia, British troops held a remembrance service on Mount Igman. At El Alamein, Parachute Regiment troops did the same during a training exercise.

The Royal British Legion said it was pleased with the response to its campaign for the silence and delighted with the turnout.

At the Cenotaph, the Queen led the wreath-laying. Almost her whole family took part or watched from a Whitehall balcony. The exception was the Queen Mother, aged 95. She had to cancel at the last moment, but Buckingham Palace said this reflected "nothing untoward".

And a merry Xmas to you too, Cedric

Gary Younge and Simon Beavis

BRITISH GAS, which made a £1.24 billion profit last year, is cancelling its pensioners' Christmas party so it can concentrate its resources on shedding 25,000 staff.

A British Gas spokeswoman said: "We are not making a contribution [to the pensioners' Christmas party]. We are in the middle of restructuring and are losing 25,000 jobs over three to five years.

"In the circumstances we think it is appropriate to concentrate our resources on our enhanced voluntary redundancy scheme."

The party was an annual treat for many people who had retired from British Gas headquarters.

Brian Isherwood, aged 63, who worked for British Gas for 42 years, has been to every one since he retired four years ago. "I think it's a little on the mean side for a company the size of British Gas. It was always great to see old friends again. The Christmas parties really helped me feel like part of the family."

Those who attended were given a free drink and a Christmas meal, and put on masks and party hats. In some years they also had entertainers.

"It had a really great atmosphere. I'm bitterly disappointed," said Brenda Woodward, aged 62, whose husband used to work for British Gas. "Still, I'm sure the top brass won't be going without their Christmas cheer."

The move is the latest in a long line of public relations blunders made by British Gas over the past year, following the 75 per cent pay rise of its chief executive, Cedric Brown, who now earns £475,000 a year.

The company faced fresh humiliation when it announced that it was handing back its charter mark award for high standards of customer service.

The move came before charter assessors had completed an audit of standards of service at the privatised company. It followed reports that the charter mark was in peril and could be taken away by the Government at the end of the year after complaints soared by 98 per cent in September compared with the same month last year.

Mr Brown denied that it was jumping before it was pushed. He said the award was no longer appropriate for a company being radically restructured to meet the Government's plans for a rapid move to full competition in the domestic gas market.

Under the Gas Act, which gained Royal Assent last week, British Gas is being restructured into four separate businesses with its pipeline operation, Transco, kept distinct from its supply business.

From next April, competing companies will be allowed to challenge British Gas's monopoly in supplying the country's 18 million domestic gas customers in readiness for full competition in April 1998.

BR fleet 'sold cheap'

THE Government was last week accused of selling off British Rail's 11,000-strong fleet of trains and carriages "on the cheap" and using the £2.5 billion proceeds to lop a penny off income tax in the Budget, *writes Keith Harper*.

Brian Wilson, Labour's transport spokesman, said that the sale of the three rolling stock leasing companies was "all about the dogma of disposal of assets to pay for tax cuts".

Three consortia — backed by a range of investors from Britain, Europe, the United States and Japan — acquired the companies for £1.8 billion. A further sum of nearly £800 million in dividends is to be paid by the companies before the sale is completed.

Mr Wilson declared: "We now have a situation where the Government is prepared to accept any price that can be obtained for public assets without regard to their value."

The price of the rolling stock was originally set by the Government at £3 billion, but it has been marked down in preparation for the sale as Hambros Bank conducted an international auction.

Mr Wilson also promised that Labour, which first put forward the idea of leasing four years ago, would bring the companies under the control of the rail regulator. This would guarantee that the "deeply needed investment in rolling stock was actually delivered". Under the Government's plans, there is no such requirement.

None of the three companies was able to announce immediate plans to replenish BR's ageing fleet.

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Whitehall attacks Irish PM over talks

David Sharrock in Belfast and Michael White

MOUNTING tension between London and Dublin over the slackening pace of the Northern Ireland peace process burst into the open on Sunday when British officials angrily pointed to the release of 88 paramilitary prisoners from the Maze prison this week as proof of their commitment to a settlement.

Stung by a call from the Irish prime minister, John Bruton, for London to accept a "reasonable compromise" to start all-party talks, Whitehall cited the little-noticed announcement of this Friday's release as one of 100 British initiatives to further the 15-month-old peace process.

Irish ministers and officials were surprised at the British description of Mr Bruton's carefully prepared remarks as "extraordinary". They said the Taoiseach feels the two governments must find a way to break the stalemate which is preventing Sinn Fein from sitting down with Unionist politicians.

Mr Bruton himself stood by every word of the speech, which he made in London last Saturday. "The essence of the speech was that the time has now been reached where the two governments have to come into the picture and take decisions together to move things forward," he said.

But Whitehall is both puzzled by Mr Bruton's "megaphone" tone and angered by his timing: on Armistice Day — just 24 hours after the Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, had used newly revised remission procedures to allow 88 prisoners, republican and loyalist, their freedom on licence this week.

The mass walkout from the notorious Maze prison, outside Belfast, will bolster Downing Street's contention that it is moving to consolidate the ceasefires and that it is Sinn Fein which is blocking political progress.

Ministers complain that it was pressure from Sinn Fein on Mr Bruton's government which aborted the Anglo-Irish summit on September 6, when they had intended to unveil the "twin-track" approach both governments favour.

In the war of words which is continuing in the absence of political progress, the salvoes fired at the weekend apparently demonstrate that the current strains in Anglo-Irish relations are deepening as President Clinton's visit to Northern Ireland on November 30 draws closer.

At the end of the Commonwealth conference in New Zealand, John Major dismissed Mr Bruton's call, insisting Sinn Fein was the obstacle to all-party talks, not London.

Mr Bruton had dismissed the obstacles to talks with Sinn Fein as "comparatively minor in historical terms" and urged Mr Major to be "courageous, generous and decisive".

Speaking on BBC TV's Breakfast With Frost, Mr Major said: "There is no purpose whatsoever in launching all-party talks until we have a basis that will make sure there is some chance those talks are likely to succeed."

Sinn Fein wants a specific date for all-party talks to start and wants an international commission to consider all weapons, including the British Army's. London and Dublin prefer a softer "target date". But Dublin does not share Whitehall's determination to make the IRA hand over at least some weapons first. Mr Major insisted: "The problem above all lies with Sinn Fein and Sinn Fein's complete reluctance to tackle the question, even with an international body, of how their arsenal of weapons and explosives are going to be taken out of commission."

The Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, said: "Sinn Fein has addressed every single issue which the British government has put before us."

● A 1,300lb van bomb intercepted close to the border within the Irish Republic sparked a huge security operation at the weekend as police arrested four men and searched for others who they believe were planning an attack in Northern Ireland.

Garda officers said that the bomb could have caused massive damage and injury. Its discovery has shaken the peace process.

Two men — one of them said by security sources to be a senior figure in an organisation called the Irish National Republican Army — were arrested. Two more were apprehended later, one late on Sunday night in Dublin. A search was continuing for a fifth man.

Death threat to defendants

LOYALIST paramilitaries have threatened to kill six defendants in a murder trial unless they plead guilty, Belfast crown court was told last week, *writes David Sharrock*.

The threat against the defendants — accused of involvement in the murder of Margaret Wright — was made by the Red Hand Commando in a coded telephone call to BBC Northern Ireland last week.

Ms Wright, an epileptic, was battered and shot by a mob at a loyalist club in south Belfast after being mistaken for a Catholic.

Details of the threat emerged after four of the defendants changed their plea to "guilty under duress". But Lord Justice Nicholson directed that pleas of not guilty be entered. "No judge could accept pleas of guilty induced by fear or menace," he said. Four defence lawyers stood down last week, saying that they were not prepared to continue but without giving further details.

Last September, Billy Elliott, an alleged former RHC member, was shot dead. It was claimed he had been executed for his part in Wright's murder.

Black watch . . . RAF technicians in the process of painting a Hawk trainer jet black. MoD research has found that black makes it easier for pilots to see each other's aircraft. Search and rescue helicopters may now change from their traditional bright yellow PHOTO: JEFF MORGAN

Costs force Trident U-turn

David Fairhall

THE Ministry of Defence has discovered it cannot after all afford to let a private firm organise the construction of a nuclear refitting dock for the navy's Trident submarines at Devonport.

Since this change of mind will also scupper plans to privatise the dockyard and reopens the argument about choosing Devonport for Trident in the first place, it will cause deep political embarrassment.

DML, which runs the Devonport naval dockyard near Plymouth, snatched the job of supporting the Navy's nuclear missile submarines from Rosyth by the narrowest of margins two years ago. Its original bid was £64 million lower than its Scottish rival's — about 1 per cent of a refit programme that will eventually be worth more than £5 billion. But DML's final price for taking on the risks of such a complex project has proved too much for the MoD.

The Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, has been advised to let the Royal Navy control the construction project and abandon indefinitely his plans to privatise the whole dockyard. Even DML's more limited role, managing the remainder of the dockyard, looks uncertain.

Such a fundamental U-turn will be deeply embarrassing for Mr Portillo, even though his predecessor, Malcolm Rifkind, made the original decisions. He could simply present the taxpayer with the DML construction bill — rumoured to be £100 million more than the £236 million estimate it submitted in 1993 —, but he is not expected to override his officials' advice in his recommendation to the Cabinet.

Scottish Chambers of Commerce has called on the Government to complete the U-turn by reverting to its original plan to refit Trident at Rosyth.

The Rosyth dockyard managers, Babcock Rosyth Defence, are embarked on an entirely different strategy, based on surface warship refitting and industrial diversification. Their main concern is likely to be the prospect of competing, if their offer to buy the Scottish yard is accepted, with a Devonport rival still in MoD hands.

Cutting class sizes a 'waste of money'

John Carvel

CHRIS WOODHEAD, chief inspector of schools, jumped into the political arena last week with a report supporting the Government's claim that reductions in class sizes would be a waste of public money.

He made an exception for children in the first three years of primary school, who needed extra support from teachers while they learned the basic skills. For these children the extra cost of smaller classes could be justified by the results.

Although this appeared to lend support to Tony Blair's pledge last month to set a maximum class size of 30 for children under seven, Mr Woodhead said the Labour leader's costings were wrong. The price would be at least £180 million — three times what Mr Blair indicated.

The intervention comes shortly before the Government publishes the figures for next year's public expenditure, which ministers want to use to counter complaints that education has been underfunded.

Mr Woodhead was attacked by teacher unions for compromising the independence of the Office for Standards in Education, which he heads.

The Ofsted findings were based on a re-examination of past inspection reports on 200,000 lessons in 1,767 schools to establish if there was any correlation between class size and the quality of teaching or learning.

None was found except among children in early primary school years: for classes of 16-20 children, 43 per cent of lessons were marked good or better; in classes of more than 35, only 36 per cent of lessons reached this standard.

Ofsted concluded:

- ❑ teaching methods and classroom organisation have a greater impact on learning than class size;
- ❑ the use of classroom assistants has an important influence on the quality of teaching and learning, especially in larger classes;
- ❑ school heads and governors could use extra resources more effectively by employing more assistants and providing more "non-contact" time for teachers to spend outside the classroom.

Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary, "noted with interest . . . that there is no simple link between class size and the quality of teaching and learning".

Reducing class size across the board was very expensive "and there is no evidence to justify this investment".

Donald MacLeod adds: Headteachers last week called on Sir Ron Dearing, the Government's chief curriculum adviser, to opt for a French-style baccalaureate to allow students to combine A levels with vocational courses.

A broad mix of courses should be compulsory, according to the National Association of Head Teachers, which criticised the pressure for specialisation from universities. Sir Ron, chairman of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, is due to report early next year on post-16 qualifications, and has proposed an "over-arching qualification" as a means of encouraging "parity of esteem" between academic and vocational studies.

Beef eating fears lead to public boycott

Edward Pilkington

ALMOST one in four people are eating less beef or are boycotting it for fear of contracting Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, or mad cow disease, from infected meat, according to an opinion poll.

Out of a representative sample of 1,017 people aged 15 and above, more than half said they were fairly or very concerned about the risks of contracting the disease. Twenty-three per cent said they had stopped eating beef or were eating less of it.

The findings highlight public anxiety about beef following a series of cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), the human version of BSE. Last week a woman died in Sunderland of the disease.

The first CJD deaths of British teenagers were reported last month. Stephen Churchill, aged 18, from Devizes, Wiltshire, died in May and an unidentified girl, aged 16, in August.

The perception that mad cow disease is building up to a renewed crisis will be further heightened by a British television documentary alleging that up to 600 cows infected with BSE are being eaten each week.

World in Action discloses that the Government's own scientific advisers assume that two cows with BSE are undetected for every one that is detected and destroyed.

Keith Meldrum, the Ministry of Agriculture's chief veterinary surgeon, said that there could be twice the number of "subclinical" cases — where cattle had been infected but were not yet showing full-blown symptoms — to diagnosed animals. "There are a significant number of cattle that could be going in for slaughter that could be incubating the disease."

Scientists have failed to confirm that BSE can be transmitted to humans. However, public health fears were sufficient to prompt the Ministry of Agriculture to tighten controls three months ago to prevent cow brains, considered potentially dangerous for consumption, being mixed with usable parts of carcasses.

Blair shifts on Europe to woo industry

Larry Elliott and Simon Beavis

TONY BLAIR on Monday signalled Labour's move to a more Euro-sceptical stance when he softened his commitment to the social chapter to allay fears that the party will impose costly proposals from Brussels on industry.

Mirroring the Government's own tougher line on Europe, Mr Blair told the Confederation of British Industry conference in Birmingham that Europe-wide social legislation would not be automatically adopted by an incoming Labour government.

The Opposition leader's determination to avoid being outflanked by John Major on Europe was also underlined by a new caution over the issue of a single currency. Mr Blair made it clear that he did not share the German and French assumption that monetary union was an inevitability.

In a warmly received address, Mr Blair was at pains to reassure business leaders that Labour's two most contentious economic commitments — the social chapter and the minimum wage — would only be implemented after full consultation with industry.

"Each piece of legislation will be judged on its merits. I have no intention whatever of agreeing to anything and everything that emerges from the EU or any other body," he said. "Proposals are just that: proposals. And they will be examined with industry on their merits."

He stressed that the key to the minimum wage issue was the level at which it was implemented, adding that Labour's proposed Low Pay Commission would include business representation to determine a "desirable level" for the wage.

On the single currency, Mr Blair said that Britain had to keep its options open — precisely the point made to the conference by Sir Leon Brittan, the European Commission vice president for external economic affairs, earlier in the day.

"It is hard to tell whether it will proceed on the basis now planned," Mr Blair said. "The Germans and the French insist that it will. We shall see."

He said that Britain had learned from its experience of the exchange rate mechanism that currency stability could only be achieved it it did not cause economic harm.

Although Mr Blair's aides denied there had been a shift in his thinking on Europe, the leadership of the CBI certainly detected a change in his stance, particularly on the issue of a single currency.

Sir Bryan Nicholson, the CBI president, said that Mr Blair appeared to be in tune with Government, particularly on monetary union where Mr Major had an opt out. "I didn't hear the leader of the Opposition say anything that was essentially different to that," he said.

Mr Blair went to Birmingham knowing that his keynote address to the CBI was potentially his most important chance to win business round to the idea of Labour taking power.

His speech was a carefully crafted appeal to industry to join him in modernising Britain, underpinned by a pledge that there would be no return to "picking winners" or penal rates of high personal taxation.

In Brief

THREE BRITISH soldiers charged with kidnapping and killing a Danish tour guide, Louise Jensen, in Cyprus, lost a legal battle to have vital prosecution evidence ruled inadmissible. Their lawyers argued they were illegally arrested at a road-block.

SIR Nicholas Scott reversed a long run of personal and political misfortune when he was selected for the safe Tory seat of Kensington and Chelsea.

LORD WILSON, the former Labour prime minister, has donated his papers to the nation.

A £200 MILLION road tunnel under the Stonehenge site, already rejected by the Department of Transport as too expensive, is back under consideration.

BRITAIN has supplied 24 million faulty condoms to Zimbabwe as part of an overseas programme to fight Aids.

ERNEST GELLNER, the anthropologist and philosopher and one of the country's leading intellectuals, died at the age of 69.

BRITAIN'S 12,000 pharmacy shops have been told to take head lice products containing a chemical insecticide off their counters because of a "theoretical" risk of them causing cancer.

JACKIE MANN, the bewhiskered ex-Battle of Britain pilot whose spirited endurance of his years as a hostage in Beirut earned him national recognition and a CBE, has died, aged 81.

THE Government has made a U-turn and agreed to monitor the 1 million tonnes of munitions, including the blistering chemical warfare agent phosgene gas, dumped in the Irish Sea between 1945 and 1976.

MINUTE particles of dust in vehicle exhausts are hastening the deaths of between five and 25 people a day, the Government heard from its own panel of experts, which is urging tougher measures on pollution control.

HOPES were fading for an 18-year-old girl who fell into a coma at her birthday party after taking an Ecstasy tablet believed to have been contaminated.

THE JAIL population is rising so fast as a result of the Home Secretary's "prison works" policy that the Prison Service says it will run out of suitable cells as early as next week.

IAN HARGREAVES, the editor of the Independent, stepped down after refusing to impose further editorial budget cuts.

Camelot to fund inquiry on gambling

Andrew Culf

CAMELOT reacted on Monday to growing unease over the addictive effects of the National Lottery by offering to fund research into gambling.

The lottery organiser celebrated the game's first anniversary by claiming it had become the most successful lottery in the world, with sales set to top £4.5 billion this week.

But the Rt Rev David Sheppard, Bishop of Liverpool, urged a thorough review. He said: "I think the scratchcards are driving a coach and horse through all the rules of gambling that regulations have tried to establish, and I don't think there is any doubt they are addictive."

He said the age limit for buying tickets should be raised from 16 to 18 because children as young as 11 were playing.

David Rigg, Camelot's director of communications, said British players spent less than people in Europe. "They are playing in moderation and within their means."

But he admitted Gamblers' Anonymous had reported a 17 per cent increase in calls since the lottery began. "I think there is quite a strong case for research into this area and we have been talking to some interested parties over a matter of months. We would be prepared to fund some of this research.

"This must be done by an independent organisation which has the confidence of experts in this area, such as Gamblers' Anonymous, so that it is credible."

Virginia Bottomley, the National Heritage Secretary, called the lottery harmless fun.

Statistics from Camelot contradicted research published last week which claimed the elderly and those on lower incomes were spending most on tickets. Mr Rigg said the 30 million people playing each week mirrored the social class and age composition of the country.

The average weekly spend by social class is £2.30 for the lowest income group and £2.33 for the highest.

Proposals for a midweek draw are being held in reserve.



Sir Robert Stephens, pictured in last year's Barbican production of King Lear, has died, aged 64

Fred West 'killed 20 others'

Duncan Campbell

FRED WEST claimed that he and his wife, Rosemary, had been involved in the deaths of 20 girls whose bodies have not been found, the trial of Mrs West heard on Monday.

Winchester crown court also heard a witness, Janet Leach, admit having lied in evidence about a six-figure deal for her story with a national newspaper group.

Mrs Leach, aged 39, was wheeled into the witness box by a doctor. She was the "appropriate adult" who had sat in on police interviews with Fred West when he was arrested in February last year, and she told the court last week that he had a "pact" with his wife that he would take all the blame for the murders.

Mrs Leach collapsed last week before completing her evidence and was taken to hospital. The trial was adjourned for three days.

On Monday she told defence counsel, Richard Ferguson QC, that Fred West had told her he knew that the body of Mary Bastholm, who went missing from a Gloucester bus stop in 1968, was buried on a farm. He had also told her that the killings were accidental and that some of them had been carried out by other people.

She could recall the many hours of conversation they had because West repeated himself so much, she said. She encouraged him to tell the truth about the bodies for the sake of the families involved.

West told her that "another 20" had been disposed of at a farm, she later told crown counsel, Brian Leveson QC, in re-examination. West told her that he, his wife, and some other men were involved. She agreed that she did not know if he was telling her the truth.

Mrs West is pleading not guilty to the murder of 10 young women and girls.

After Mrs Leach had finished her evidence, Mr Justice Mantell told the jury that they must be clear that what Mrs Leach said was not evidence against Mrs West. She had been called only to give rebuttal evidence after the defence had introduced tape-recorded interviews with Fred West.

The court will hear closing speeches this week.

Test case over infant's death

Clare Dyer

THE Court of Appeal was asked to decide on Monday whether a man whose daughter was born prematurely and later died after he stabbed her mother could legally be convicted of murder or manslaughter.

The unique case was referred to the court by the Attorney General, Sir Nicholas Lyell, after a High Court judge ruled that there was no case to go to a jury.

The man has the right to remain anonymous during the two-day appeal hearing, the outcome of which cannot affect his acquittal.

The man stabbed his girlfriend, then 24 weeks pregnant with his child, in May 1990 during a drunken row. Two weeks later she went into premature labour and the girl was born.

A baby born at 26 weeks has a 50 per cent chance of survival, but the girl had been injured when the knife penetrated the womb and had to have several operations.

She died 121 days after birth, primarily because her lungs were not developed enough.

The man pleaded guilty to wounding his girlfriend and was jailed for four years. Later he was charged with the murder of his daughter. But the trial judge, Mr Justice Holland, ruled there was no case to answer and he was acquitted.

He held that there was evidence on which the jury could decide that the stabbing had brought on the premature birth. After reviewing legal pronouncements and cases dating back centuries, he concluded there were no cases binding on him. Legal authorities conflicted but none covered the case of a foetus which remained in the womb two weeks after the unlawful act before being born alive.

Robert Smith, QC, contended that murder or manslaughter was committed if a child was born alive, lived independently of its mother, and then died as a result of intentional injury caused while it was in the womb.

Row looms for utilities

THE Office of Water Services, the government-appointed regulator of the water industry, said at the weekend it was investigating the pricing policies of three privatised utilities amid claims they are cheating customers, *writes John Mullin.*

Ian Byatt, director-general of Ofwat, is threatening to force the Yorkshire, South West and North West water companies to allow him access to confidential files. He wants to know the reasons for a series of shortcomings, including the supplying of contaminated water and the failure to meet targets on repairing supply breakdowns and leaks. He wants to know why improvements have yet to be made after the companies imposed specific charges to pay for them.

There may be a political row ahead. The privatised utilities make profits of more than £1.6 billion a year, and bills have doubled in five years. Directors' salaries have increased by up to 500 per cent since privatisation.

Labour battle over benefits

Patrick Wintour

A FIERCE dispute broke out last week within the Labour leadership over plans by the shadow chancellor, Gordon Brown, to withhold benefits from the young unemployed if they refuse to take up places on one of Labour's training, employment or education schemes.

A senior shadow cabinet member alleged that Mr Brown's proposals were not party policy. "Many senior people have been taken totally by surprise by these proposals. We have been taken aback because it runs counter to what we have been saying about the Government's coercive approach. There was no discussion over this and the proposals should not be presented as party policy because they are not party policy."

The weight of the criticism, known to reflect the views of more than one shadow cabinet member, is evidence that the simmering tensions among those closest to Tony Blair have not been resolved.

Mr Brown insisted that his under-25s employment plan had won proper endorsement within Labour's policy-making machine.

He said his mixture of employment, education and training schemes — with the threatened loss of 40 per cent of income support for those who refuse — struck the correct balance between rights and responsibilities.

Mr Brown's Treasury team is adamant that Tony Blair's office saw all the relevant papers and that the policy's thrust is clear in the economic policy statement endorsed at last month's party conference in Brighton.

In a move designed to underpin New Labour's rhetoric about rights and responsibilities, Mr Brown said that the unemployed would have their income support cut by 40 per cent if they refused to join one of Labour's options. A single 18-year-old receiving £36.80 income support and living at home would stand to lose £14.72 of his weekly benefit.

Senior party figures have argued against coercive US workfare-style policies, in which claimants are forced to take up job and training placements or lose benefits. But Mr Brown said that his new deal — launched jointly with the shadow education spokesman, David Blunkett — offered high quality training and work opportunities, while workfare offered work for benefit.

He insisted the range of job opportunities would be so good that he did not expect anyone to reject Labour's offers. "There will be a huge welcome from young people for the prospect of jobs and education once again being on offer."

Traditionally, Labour has opposed compulsion in training. Mr Brown insisted his plans were not comparable with government schemes. "This is not a lurch to the right by the Labour party. This is the Labour party setting out the philosophy of a party supported by a decent hard-working majority."

Tory officials warned that they would be accusing Labour of hypocrisy.

● Alan Howarth, the Tory MP who defected to Labour last month, has been told by party officials that he cannot fight his present seat of Stratford-upon-Avon at the next election and must find another constituency.

A local Labour party spokesman said that its selection process for a candidate to contest the seat was already "well advanced" by the time Mr Howarth announced his defection on the eve of the Tory party conference.

Mr Howarth, elected with a 22,892 majority at the last election, was the first Tory to cross the floor of Parliament and join Labour.

Scargill plans new party

Seumas Milne and Lawrence Donegan

ARTHUR SCARGILL, the miners' leader, has said a Socialist Labour Party could be set up within six months, ready to contest seats across the country in the next general election.

Last week he claimed widespread labour movement support for his plan. But it was dismissed by the Labour party leadership and criticised by leftwing Labour MPs, who urged activists to fight their corner from within. If the new party is established it will join the mushrooming group of alternative parties from which voters will be able to choose in the next election.

The National Union of Mineworkers president raised the possibility of founding a trade-union-based Socialist Labour Party on May Day 1996, to put forward candidates in every constituency in the country. However, he later said it should not oppose "socialist MPs".

Mr Scargill said a further meeting would be held soon under the auspices of the Unshackle the Unions Campaign — a pressure group for the repeal of anti-union laws — to consider the response.

The miners' president first floated the idea of a leftwing party last month after changes to Labour's constitution, including final rejection of the traditional Clause 4 commitment to common ownership.

The Labour leadership declared itself relaxed about the prospect. "Arthur Scargill is a spent force," a senior source said.

There was little support for the NUM leader from the traditional left of the party. Jeremy Corbyn, MP for Islington North, said any breakaway would not attract the support of any current MPs. "I have a great deal of admiration for Arthur. He is a great working-class leader, but we should argue for socialist policies from within the Labour party."

Another senior Labour leftwinger said the formation of a new left party was virtually inevitable after the changes forced through by Tony Blair. "New Labour is itself a new party. Let's hold on to the old Labour party," he said.

One senior leftwing union official opposed to the NUM leader's proposal said: "Blair has to understand that dissatisfaction goes far wider than those putting their heads over the parapet for a new party. This will at least start a debate about what should be done."

An outrage that must be punished

NIGERIA must be expelled, not just suspended, from the Commonwealth and subjected to immediate international sanctions following last week's act of murderous barbarism, when the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other minority-rights activists were summarily executed on the orders of the junta despite billowing protests from all over the world. The Commonwealth will destroy its very nature if it continues to give sanctuary to the amoral thugs responsible for this outrage, provocatively timed to occur just as the Commonwealth leaders' conference was getting under way in Auckland. The Commonwealth should respond in kind. A two-year suspension is not enough.

No one, of course, can be absolutely sure whether stronger action would have prevented the despots masquerading as Nigeria's leaders from flouting world opinion in such a bloody way: but it might at least have prevented General Abacha from believing that the West would merely wring its hands in ritual sorrow while retaining its strong trading links with Nigeria. John Major's Government should hang its head in shame for feebly describing the illegal trial as "flawed", hoping against the odds that Nigeria's generals would succumb to honeyed words from Foreign Office officials. Shell, the giant international corporation with the lion's share of Nigeria's oil — which it is developing with the state-owned oil company — weakly hid its concern behind a barrel of oil. Even Nelson Mandela, who should know better than any other leader the possibilities of international pressure, has been tarnished by the affair. Despite an impassioned plea from Ken Saro-Wiwa's son, Mr Mandela preferred quiet words to sanctions out of a misplaced loyalty for the support which Nigeria, under different rulers, gave to his freedom struggle. Yet in the end, sanctions played a crucial role in breaking up South Africa's apartheid regime.

And that is what should happen now — a multi-pronged imposition of sanctions while the whiff of moral outrage still ruffles the air: a block on all communications with Nigeria, especially air travel; a trade embargo, particularly on oil which is the lifeblood of the economy (or would have been had the generals not siphoned so much of it away for their own ends), and a freeze on Nigeria's assets invested abroad, especially those of the ruling junta — if they can be found. Above all, there should be an immediate end to all arms exports as Mr Major has indicated. In theory, this shouldn't be necessary, because an EU ban is supposed to have been in operation for a year. But Britain has flouted it so frequently — 30 times in all — that it might as well not be there. The first retributive steps in this direction have now been taken. The International Finance Corp, the private sector lending arm of the World Bank, has stopped its involvement in funding a $3 billion natural gas project in southeast Nigeria and Shell has postponed its own decision. Let that be the cue for others.

Nigeria, potentially a rich democracy, has been drained of its wealth and has little left now to lose except its dignity. Tragically, nothing can bring back the lives of those so callously executed after a trial in which defence lawyers were harassed, prosecution witnesses bribed or threatened and Mr Saro-Wiwa's elderly mother and his wife beaten outside the court. The least we can do to ensure that they didn't die in vain is to take prompt action to bring this hateful, dictatorial regime to an end and to restore democracy to a people who have suffered enough.

Spurning the Oval Office

COLIN POWELL was right, in the end, to say no. There was always a mismatch between the high expectations which he aroused and his own much lower self-projection. Interviewers found it hard to elucidate either why he wished to stand (if he did) for the US presidency or what he actually stood for. For many the strongest appeal was his African American identity, yet his pronouncements on race issues were disappointingly bland. He would not have been the first American to put himself forward as a presidential candidate without a distinct platform. But he did not give the impression of being likely to define it more sharply in office. He could not even commit himself fully to the Republican party until he announced his decision not to run. That was carrying amateurism in politics a little too far.

Gen Powell said last week that he would not be a candidate for president or for any other elective office in 1996: he did not leap to deny the possibility of the year 2000. He has neither pledged himself to support the Republican choice for 1996 nor ruled out re-endorsing President Clinton. And he remains open, it would appear, to being offered an appointed office under a new administration. We may not have heard everything from him yet, but his reception next time may not be so tolerant.

Gen Powell's lengthy hesitations on his future were remarkably well received in the US (and British) press. No one, friend or foe, quoted former President Johnson's explicit advice on the need to stop sitting in one place for too long. This was partly because of the difficulty of knowing whose friend or foe Gen Powell might become. There were genuine hopes too that a Powell candidature could check the ugly rightwards shift of the Republicans, and that a black president would offer the US a new unifying vision. With so many tarnished figures around, the American public desperately wants an unblemished hero. In real life they don't come so easily and there are questions to be asked about certain aspects of his own career — including the cover-up of the My Lai massacre and some of the shadier dealings of the Reagan-Bush era. Nor did the polls indicate that Gen Powell was regarded as a hero in the black community. His own view — that achieving high position proves how far the US has advanced racially — does not mesh with that from the bottom of the pile. His views on social policies are loosely liberal but unfocused: he is in favour of cutting social welfare though against doing so "harshly". The strongest argument in his favour was that by standing he would lock out a more extreme alternative.

So is it back to fixing Volvos? Gen Powell has been described by a leading Republican friend as an orderly man who does things in the right order, namely, (1) sell a million books, (2) decide whether to run for president, (3) resume his hobby of rebuilding old cars. It was a good story while it lasted, but was the general's journey really necessary?

Tory MPs misread the mood again

IT WAS supposedly a free vote and several Conservative MPs undoubtedly took advantage of that fact. Yet last week's 322-271 vote for full disclosure of MPs' outside earnings was essentially a defeat for the Conservative party. The Commons debate on the implementation of the Nolan committee report revealed a governing party which is deeply out of touch with public feeling and which failed to handle a crucial issue of civic confidence in the way that should have been expected in a healthy polity. Those 271 votes were almost entirely Conservative votes. They represented the collective judgment of the governing party. Those votes and the speeches made in support of them were powerful testimony to the psychological disorientation wrought by 16 years of uninterrupted one-party rule. To put it simply, most of the party's MPs continued to put themselves first and everything else a fairly distant second, even when it should have been obvious that this was an expensive self-indulgence. Their overriding — and in many cases their only — thought was for their own earnings. The problem of Parliament's status, and of the broader reputation of public life and institutions, hardly got a look in.

It is a mark of how disconnected from reality the Conservatives have become that they should be so slow on the uptake. Instead of acknowledging, as a majority of the Commons did with their votes, that the publication of earnings is a legitimate reform and that Parliament faces a grave test of its own credibility, most Tory MPs persuaded themselves that the moral issue in last week's debate was all about their right to financial privacy. Or it was about the need for politics to remain a career for all the professional talents. Or it was about anything else that came into their heads. Too many Conservative MPs have deluded themselves that they are fighting for an issue of principle which the outside world (and last week's majority) simply does not recognise as such. Meticulous disclosure of MPs' interests is part of the price which our political culture must pay for public confidence.

Israel must become a nation, not a land

Martin Woollacott

THE rabbi from the Golan said the problem was hate. He was one of hundreds of religious representatives who met in a Jerusalem conference hall last week. Anguishing over what they saw as the accusation that "the murderer came from your side", they fear an attack on their way of life, and on their right to a part in shaping the nation.

Extremism in Israel springs less out of the territorial question than out of the sense that a community and an identity are under threat. The hate, the rabbi felt, could easily be — had already been — focused on them. It is hard to understand what has happened in Israel without looking at the reversal of the fortunes of the religiously-orientated groups inspired by settlements founded in the past 10 years. The settlers were told they were new pioneers whose dedication and bravery were replacing those of the early socialists. That seemed to underline an enhanced status for the Orthodox religious, just when they were achieving prominence in institutions such as the army and when their parties, notably the National Religious Party, were often pivotal in parliamentary politics. Land, settlements, social mobility, political success, and religious belief appeared to be in synthesis.

But the sense of a breakthrough, of being on the verge of a leading position in mainstream Israeli society, was followed by a cruel disillusion. When Labour came to power in 1992, the settlers went from being heroes to nuisances overnight, and the larger community felt diminished and threatened as a result. In negotiations with the Palestinians and the Arab states, settlements had always been contentious: but until the Likud fell, the die was not cast. For Labour, which planned to preserve many big settlements, the settlers were obstacles. For the Likud, they were assets, bodies on the street in the contest with Labour. Some settlers, using funds from the US that came directly rather than through established institutions, may have seen themselves as half outside the state and half outside the law.

What they felt was also felt to a degree by people of modern Orthodox background in Israel. Professor Charles Liebman, a political scientist at Bar-Ilan University, where Rabin's assassin was a student, says the settlers felt "a grave loss of self-esteem . . . their enormous sense that they were the real Israelis was shaken". Hirsh Goodman, editor of the Jerusalem Report, in a prescient commentary three weeks ago, blamed both Rabin and Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu for the hysterical mood of the settlers and their supporters: Rabin refused to empathise or explain while Netanyahu could offer no practical alternative to Labour policy but still wanted to use the settlers' anger.

The appearance of small groups ready to use violence is hardly surprising. Facts about the Eyal group of which Yigal Amir was a member are sparse, but there is no evidence of widespread conspiracy. Fertilised in part by racist ideology that Rabbi Meir Kahane brought from the US, they represent the extreme form of the new religious activism. The transformation of a tradition whose recourse in times of adversity used to be to pray and fast to one in which action is seen as justified underlines how much has changed in religion, and in Israel.

The political struggle there has ceased to be about a settlement with Palestinians and Syrians, and is being driven by the desperation of groups who feel they will be losers in a new dispensation they neither want nor can control.

For all the difficulties ahead in negotiations, Israeli politics now moves on from geography. The murder of Yitzhak Rabin means that the opposition can no longer shape its strategies around the question of if and when to hand over land to Arabs. The bankruptcy of that approach is clear. Some Israelis argue that it led directly to Rabin's death, most that the territorial question can never again be debated, as it was recently, on the streets.

The change strands Likud. The party combined its radical inheritance with a flexibility that enabled it to govern for 15 years and to avoid dealing with contradictions at the heart of its ideology. Likud inherited a commitment to Greater Israel and the principle that there could never be peace with the Arabs until they were completely cowed. But it made peace with Egypt, handing over Sinai. It acquiesced in the peace treaty with Jordan, giving up by implication its claim to the East Bank. Party leaders avoid mentioning Gaza. Likud's purity on territory has been breached. The new Likud leader bases his claims not on the sanctity of land but on an overdone version of the Islamist threat. Without the settlers, Likud is bereft of a strategy. The economy is booming, party differences on social policy are muddled, and Likud's hold on the Oriental constituency has been reduced by the defection of David Levy, its most important Oriental leader.

ISRAELIS have for some time been trying to look forward to a politics that is not about the territories. Some hope that politics will in time revolve around environment, privatisation, open government, constitutional reform, quality of life. Others, like Professor Liebman, believe that politics will develop into a cultural struggle — between those who want Israel to become like any other state and those who insist on a Jewish identity, not identical with, but related to, the views of religious believers. He hopes that Rabin's death will take the edge off the ferocity with which that struggle will be waged.

The Labour government, largely secular, represents to many religious Israelis a tendency in national life which will discard the land and in time everything else distinctively Jewish. At the conference hall, the concern of the rabbis was palpable. "Some of us", says one, "did not do enough to oppose an atmosphere in which this killing could happen. But I feel it's almost like a Chernobyl situation. Religious energy can be terribly dangerous. There was no way to vent the energies building up and so an explosion comes."

Israel's dilemma is not whether deals with Syria or the Palestinians are worth the risk, but how to be Israel without the issue of the land.

The Washington Post

Bosnia Talks on Brink of Success

Michael Dobbs in Dayton, Ohio

THE WAR in Bosnia is ending as it began 3½ years ago, with arguments over the most primeval issues of all: territory and power.

Over the past two weeks, the men who were ultimately responsible for unleashing Europe's worst conflict since World War II have had the opportunity to air their differences face to face, rather than on the battlefield. The talks between Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia, Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia and Franjo Tudjman of Croatia are taking place behind the high-security fences of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. But conversations with associates of all three men suggest they are within striking distance of an agreement.

Even the principals do not know how and when the talks will end. There are huge obstacles to be overcome, particularly over the status of Sarajevo, which chief U.S. negotiator Richard C. Holbrooke has described as "the Jerusalem of the Balkans," the capital that all sides crave as their own and the symbol of so much suffering.

Despite these caveats, it seems clear that the endgame has arrived. U.S. and European negotiators are becoming increasingly confident that the Dayton talks will produce some kind of agreement. The reasoning behind their confidence is simple: None of the rival factions has a real interest in continuing the war. All sides are looking to the United States to impose a solution.

A successful conclusion to the Dayton talks would clear the way for the deployment of tens of thousands of NATO troops to the Balkans to enforce a peace agreement. There is a strong possibility that up to 20,000 U.S. combat troops will be spending Christmas in Bosnia.

The consequences of failure would be particularly serious for the Bosnian Serbs, who are widely regarded as the primary instigators of the war. Over the past few months, the geopolitical tide has turned against the Serbs. They have been pummeled from the air by NATO bombing raids and from the ground by a combined Croat-Muslim offensive. If the war were to continue, they would probably end up with much less than the 48 percent of Bosnian territory they control.

On paper, the Muslims have the most obvious reason for continuing the war, if only to regain lost territory. Militarily, however, they are considerably weaker than the Serbs and their nominal Croat allies. They cannot afford to lose the support of the United States.

By all accounts, the chances of a successful outcome to the Dayton talks have been increased by some remarkable personal chemistry. At first, the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base seemed an unlikely setting: delegates complained about being locked up for weeks on end and about the austere living quarters.

In fact, the windswept base has turned out to be a good choice. The delegates are all housed in two-storey buildings around a quadrangle and bump into each other as soon as they walk out their front door. The notion of "proximity talks" quickly gave way to face-to-face negotiations.

On the first day of the talks, November 1, there was an awkward moment as Secretary of State Warren Christopher coaxed the three delegation chiefs to shake each others' hands. By the time he returned to preside over a signing ceremony for a Muslim-Croat federation, he was pleased to see intense conversations taking place between people who had barely been on speaking terms just a few days before.

Despite the impromptu nature of such encounters, the U.S. negotiating team has devoted enormous attention to creating a suitable environment for the talks. Ceremonies have been elaborately choreographed to prevent unwanted interruptions. There are three Bosnian Serb representatives on the joint Serb delegation headed by Milosevic. But they have been forced to take a back seat — quite literally — in the negotiations.

The pace is grueling. Holbrooke holds a two-hour session with his negotiating team from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m. every night to plan for the day ahead. Everybody is expected to be back at work by 7 a.m.

In order to encourage the sides to resolve territorial disputes, the Americans have installed what is known as the "map room" a few steps down the corridor from Holbrooke's quarters. A vast map of Bosnia stretches from floor to ceiling, enabling the delegates to locate the hills, factories and cemeteries over which they and their followers have spilled so much blood. The room also contains computer equipment, previously used to give U.S. pilots simulated mock-ups of Bosnia's mountainous terrain.

● In a breakthrough at Erdut on Sunday, which U.S. officials say boosts the chances of a peace settlement, rebel Serbs signed an agreement with Croatia to return the Eastern Slavonia region, seized by the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav army at the beginning of the war.

The agreement provides for a transitional period of up to two years during which the region will be administered by the international community. It also includes guarantees designed to protect the interests of the local Serb minority.



Bridge-building: As Bosnia signed a Muslim-Croat agreement in Dayton, Ohio, a Spanish soldier crossed the river in Mostar, which is to be reintegrated under the accord PHOTOGRAPH: JOZO PAVKOVIC

Obscene Act By Nigeria

EDITORIAL

THE WORLD community urged Nigeria not to do it. But the Nigerian military despot, Gen. Sani Abacha, is not one to be fazed by international outcries or humanitarian appeals for clemency. After government-appointed stooges did his bidding and found Nigerian playwright, environmentalist and Nobel Prize candidate Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other human rights activists guilty of inciting murder — in a secret trial that no one could respect — he had them hanged on Friday last week. It was the most obscene act yet by a disgusting regime.

Others in the world must now be as uncompromising with Gen. Abacha and his ruling clique as they were with the lives of the condemned activists. For two years, these uniformed autocrats perpetuated a long line of Nigerian military strongmen who have pillaged and drained profits from their oil-rich nation's treasury.

Gen. Abacha has been in the thick of it all. There hasn't been a coup in Nigeria in the past 20 years in which he didn't have a hand. Under his rule, greed and corruption have continued unbound, democracy has been trifled with, and his nation of 100 million has experienced its worst anguish since the Biafran war ended a quarter-century ago.

Now it is time for other countries to speak back to repressive Nigeria. The Clinton administration has condemned the killings. But international pressure must be racheted up beyond tough words. A regime as poisonous as Gen. Abacha's deserves isolation. The only Nigeria to be granted access to international markets and forums should be one that is moving swiftly toward civilian rule and that shows respect for human rights norms. That disqualifies the murderous Abacha regime on all counts.

Land for Peace – the Vision of Rabin

Stephen S. Rosenfeld

THE ACHIEVEMENT of Israel's Yitzhak Rabin lay here: In an age of ever-harsher self-serving ethnic politics, he wrenched himself and his country into a quest for feasible accommodation with the people — the Palestinians — with whom Israelis contest for the same national ground.

A full accommodation it could not and cannot be. To believers, the Holocaust established the absolute priority of a national home for its Jewish survivors. Hitler's murder of 6 million Jews overwhelmed the otherwise unanswerable complaint that somebody else lived there.

As a young commander, Rabin himself coldly did his share of depleting then mostly Arab Palestine of enough Palestinians to ensure the new Israel both sovereignty and the requisite reliable Jewish majority. This struggle, including terrorism, represented the higher destiny of the day.

Another people caught in the gears of history might have accepted its bad luck, transformed it into myth. Palestinians transformed it into resistance, including terrorism, surprising almost everyone by showing as much determination not to be thrown into the desert as Israelis showed not to be thrown into the sea.

This is the primal force that let Rabin, in coming to terms with it, establish his claim on history. Not merely did he change from war to peace. Nor did he simply go from countering Palestinian resistance to confronting the reluctance of his own people to trade known old risks for strange new ones.

At the same time he made the daring and perilous passage from a basic instinctive conception of Zionism — one that still holds many Israelis in thrall — to a more humanistic sort. The first focused on elemental demands for Jewish survival and set no limits on what was permitted to serve it.

Rabin expressed the second, still-unfolding conception unforgettably at the White House two years ago: "Let me say to you, the Palestinians, we are destined to live together on the same soil in the same land. . . We say to you today in a loud and clear voice: enough of blood and tears, enough."

I called on Rabin one morning when he was his country's ambassador in Washington after the 1967 war. On his desk was a military map full of curved thrusting arrows and colored boxes — the chief of staff's triumphant Sinai campaign. He expressed Israel's then-expansive confidence — a confidence to be much undone in the 1973 war — in its own military and technological prowess.

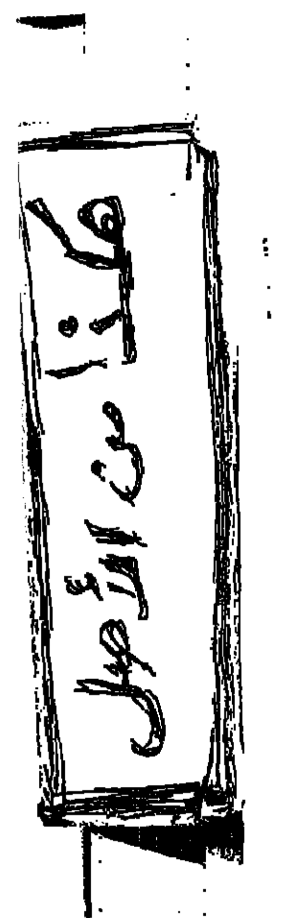
We happened to be at lunch on the electric fall day in 1977 when it was announced that Anwar Sadat was going to Jerusalem. Though still the military man, Rabin had by now graduated to savvy strategist. At once he pounced on the idea of making a peace with Egypt in order to allow Israel to isolate Syria.

Thence to the chain of Israeli-Palestinian deaths and insights that led to Rabin's largest and last role of strategist-statesman. His success was symbolized by the famous White House handshake with Yasser Arafat in 1993. Rabin made evident his anguish at accepting the former terrorist as a partner and equal. The supposedly more volatile Arafat kept to himself whatever feelings he may have had about shaking hands with one of his people's leading disinheritors.

Like Arafat, Rabin had come a long way. As a young general he had driven thousands of Arab civilians out of central Israel in service to the imperative — survival — of Zionism in 1948. As a mature political leader nearly half a century later, he had come to recognize that Zionism's contemporary imperatives — democracy, regional and world integration — required a historic compromise with the Palestinian people. To grasp that vision of land for peace and to undertake to make it prevail in the Israeli political arena — this was his work.

Rabin is not to be romanticized. Critics can point to the checks he did not put on the violent settler movement, and to the West Bank and Greater Jerusalem settlements he did not keep from expanding. In these two areas Rabin's program, bargaining style and political needs were in tension with his reach for accord with the Palestinians.

Nor was Rabin ever one to promote a country-wide, block-by-block type of idealized ethnic coexistence. Rather, he was heading toward a state of affairs that would let Israelis and Palestinians live "side by side in dignity." Others called it separation. It would not be the promised land. But in a world of Bosnias, it is vastly encouraging that others have Rabin's legacy on which to base a continuing search for peace.



One Battle Powell Chose Not To Fight

Bob Woodward

ON THE afternoon of June 3, 1994, William J. Bennett, the former secretary of education, author and conservative guru, visited retired Gen. Colin L. Powell at the general's new home in McLean.

It was still more than two years away, but the 1996 presidential race was on Bennett's mind. "The country will be looking for a man of a certain character," he told Powell. "We're always playing out some version of George Washington, the indispensable man."

"And you're him, you know. If there's a modern Washington, you're him. You stand up at the Republican convention and say, 'I'm running for president because I want to save the American people.' That means you just bring everybody together. Standing ovation."

But despite the ensuing polls and cheerleading, the entreaties and the promises of support, Powell decided that this was not the 1780s, or even the 1950s, when another general, Dwight D. Eisenhower, stepped in to save America. In the end, Powell could not see himself as that "indispensable man."

He arrived at that conclusion through the same step-by-step questioning and obsessive attention to detail that have characterized his decision-making throughout his life. Define the nation's problems. Look for solutions. Decide if he was uniquely qualified to provide them.

Powell never came up with fully satisfactory answers to any of those questions, he said recently to associates. Those Republicans and others who urged him to run argued that he would be a healer for the nation.

If there was a clear major foreign policy question or domestic crisis that he thought he had a solution for, Powell told one friend, he would feel an obligation to run.

But he was not able to define fully what needed healing, and felt he was miles away from having a clear remedy, particularly to the narrow legislative questions of the day.

Powell was offended that many Republicans reduced their arguments to, "We'll lose without you." He felt he was not being invited to the GOP for any purpose other than to dig the party out of the hole it had dug for itself. "People were popping up out of nowhere," said another close associate, "and they were representing themselves only and their interests. Very few people were addressing his [Powell's] interests."

Powell's interest in political office was always focused on broad themes of community, tolerance and personal responsibility rather than on the hard policy questions. "Specific discussions of things like Medicare never grabbed him," said one of his best friends. In August, just a month before Powell's book, My American Journey, was released, he told friends that he had read the galleys of neoconservative author Ben Wattenberg's book, Values Matter Most, and was quite taken with the theme.

Reporters at Powell's news conference questioned whether his decision was influenced by the danger associated with a presidential campaign, the threat of personal attack in political life made only too real again with the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin. Powell's wife, Alma, acknowledged the concern, but both denied it was a deciding factor.

Still, it was no secret that Alma Powell and many of his closest friends were opposed to his candidacy throughout the deliberations.

But even as he thought through the issues, and the dangers, Powell never got a handle on the political fundamentals of a presidential campaign.

Last April, when he heard a reporter suggest on television that Powell lacked four things — the passion to run, a clear political persona, a game plan, and a political party — he called the reporter at home that night to agree. More than six months later — even though he now has a party, the Republicans — he felt he had made only modest progress on the other three.

Eventually, he came to realize that he could not find the internal drive, the fire in the belly for the race, and that its absence provided an answer in itself. "You know it when you see it," one friend told him bluntly, "and I don't see it."

However, he may find comfort in the 13 "Colin Powell's Rules" listed at the back of My American Journey. Rule No. 1: "It's ain't as bad as you think. It will look better in the morning."



Non-starter . . . Colin Powell, with his wife Alma, announcing he will not run PHOTOGRAPH: WIN McNAMEE

Too Bad He Isn't a Candidate

EDITORIAL

PRESUMABLY both President Clinton and Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole have been feeling much better since former Gen. Colin Powell last week made official his decision not to be a candidate for the presidency.

We suppose the two party front-runners could even be forgiven a little giddiness, as could some of the others seeking the office, such as Sen. Phil Gramm and Lamar Alexander.

Powell's prospective entry into the race had threatened to upend all of their ambitions. But when the last sigh of relief has been heaved by all of the aforementioned men, they would do well to entertain a much less reassuring thought. They would do well to contemplate what it was about Powell — and no less important, what it is about themselves — that made the general's potential candidacy so magnetic and inspiring and party-transcending to so many Americans.

If they are honest with themselves, they will not buy the cheap, easy answer about how the unknown and unattainable candidate is always more attractive than the candidate who is declared, and how all that would have changed the minute Powell got into the race, etc. etc.

They will acknowledge, at least to themselves, that the leaderly qualities of dignity, clarity and straightforwardness that Powell projects, not to mention his rare ability to laugh at himself and his total inability to put on airs or engage in degrading gimmicks and love-me stunts, are qualities that people are desperate for in our political life. Especially are they desperate for them in the men who are laying claim to the office of president.

Powell may or may not be all of the wondrous things his supporters say he is, but there are a few truths of which you can be certain. He does not indulge (and never has) the maddeningly self-referential, it's-all-about-me temptation that so often disfigures the president's prose.

Unlike Dole, Powell is not given to reflexively converting so many of the issues that come before him — instantaneously and without missing a beat — into mean, small-bore assault material against whomever he is taking on that day.

You cannot imagine Powell, had he got into the race, spending an entire campaign as Gramm has deciding which people to throw out of some metaphorical wagon. And you equally cannot imagine his having a resume transplant as former insider, now self-described outsider Alexander has, or tricking himself out in some attire like Alexander's famous red-plaid lumberjack's shirt by way of explaining to the American voter why he should be president.

Not even close. Powell last week said sensible things about the Republican Party, about the political opportunities of African Americans, about the point where the trimming of government (of which he approves) becomes something different and destructive, especially in regard to poor children.

He was easy and unflustered in discussing Alma Powell's experience with depression. Dole had earlier said that Powell would be in trouble once he started having to take the tough, nitty-gritty questions about things like ethanol. As the press conference wore to its end last week, we found ourselves wishing someone would ask an ethanol question, since by then we had decided he could probably put that one away too.

Too bad he isn't a candidate; but Powell, if the others would take a good look at the tape of his presentation, could yet have a positive impact on the '96 campaign.

Dole Campaign Lacks Clear Agenda

Dan Balz

COLIN L. POWELL'S decision not to seek the presidency in 1996 provided Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole, R-Kan., with a straighter path to the Republican nomination, but Powell's prospective candidacy also revealed Dole's potential weaknesses as a challenger to President Clinton in the general election.

Dole's problems appear directly related to negative reaction to the Republican congressional agenda, and to an improved political performance by Clinton. "The president is doing better, so it means those who oppose him are not going to be viewed quite as well," said Bill Lacy, Dole's deputy campaign chairman. "Making tough decisions on Capitol Hill will pay huge dividends in the long run, but in the short run it could be a problem."

But Dole's Republican opponents say the problem is deeper than that. "He still doesn't have a clear message that people know where he wants to take the country," said Charlie Black, a top adviser to Dole's GOP rival, Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas. "In the Republican Party, he's well known and popular, but they don't know where he stands on issues. He's not associated with an agenda."

Democrats took an even harsher view. "When you're 70 years old, if you don't have something that says, 'Here is what I bring and where I want to take the nation,' you end up being caught in the past," said Peter Hart, a Democratic pollster. "When he starts out talking about being one of the 12 people who voted against Medicare, he comes out being both meaner and more in the past than he wants to be."

Black also said Dole may be suffering in two ways from the reactions to the Republican legislative agenda. Opponents of the agenda hold it against Dole, while those who support it give House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., more credit for it than they do Dole.

By almost any measure, Dole just concluded one of the most successful weeks of his presidential campaign. He dispatched Powell, his strongest probable challenger to the nomination, without firing a shot, and picked up two crucial endorsements: New Hampshire Gov. Steve Merrill and Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge. "I think it was a huge week," Lacy said.

But last week ended with several disappointing polls for Dole. A Gallup Poll for USA Today and CNN showed Dole losing to Clinton by 53 percent to 43 percent. In August, that same poll showed the two in a statistical dead heat, with Dole at 47 percent and Clinton at 46 percent. At the same time, the poll found that as many voters view Dole negatively as positively.

Other polls show Dole with a somewhat more positive image, but the trend line has been moving down. In March, the NBC News-Wall Street Journal Poll found that 51 percent of those surveyed viewed Dole favorably, while 19 percent viewed him unfavorably. Last month, Dole's favorable ratings fell to 36 percent and his negatives had risen to 28 percent.

The other troubling poll came in New Hampshire, where Dole's lead over his rivals fell to just 10 percentage points in an American Research Group survey for the Manchester Union Leader. Dole stood at 27 percent, with Patrick J. Buchanan (who has been endorsed by the Union Leader) second at 17 percent, and 31 percent undecided.

Running behind Dole and Buchanan were businessman Malcolm S. "Steve" Forbes Jr. with 7 percent, former Tennessee governor Lamar Alexander and Sen. Richard G. Lugar of Indiana at 6 percent, Gramm and commentator Alan Keyes at 3 percent. Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, Rep. Robert Dornan of California and businessman Maurice "Morry" Taylor finished with asterisks.

After Apartheid, Hope and Decay

Charges of corruption in high places and rising crime have dampened the euphoria that greeted last year's election of an ANC-led administration, says **Wilf Nussey**

AS SOUTH AFRICA completes its 18-month transition to majority rule with the election of local government officials in most areas, much tangible improvement is evident in the country. Everyday race relations are more relaxed — a great releasing of tension after the April 1994 national election. A tolerance long suppressed by apartheid is sidelining racial extremists, while bright new talent is emerging in business, sports, media and the arts. There are still dangerously volatile situations like the aggressive insularity of the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party, but in general South Africa's peoples are getting along pretty well.

There is much superficial change too, as in Johannesburg's central business district — once white man's country with his hotels, shops and theaters, financial headquarters, pubs and clubs. Blacks worked and shopped there but had to go home to segregated townships. Today's downtown is almost as black as Lagos or Nairobi, a seething, noisy, dirty, colorful and dangerous ferment of people and action. Street hawkers sell anything from clothes to drugs to freshly roasted meat. Traffic is hectic. Sensible people carry little cash and keep a firm grip on it.

Many businesses have moved headquarters to the safer northern suburbs. Here and there whites congregate, as in the security-wrapped Carlton Centre and the stock exchange, but on the streets they are just one small ingredient in a mostly African mix. "When I walk down Commissioner Street, it's so rare to see another white face, I wave," says a friend.

The urban flowering of blacks throughout the country should have happened long ago. The greatest tragedy of apartheid was its gigantic waste of time and money. Had all that been used instead to unite and advance South Africa's peoples, how mighty a country we would be today.

The new South Africa is stimulating — letting in fresh light and air from outside, offering exciting opportunities, reveling in unfamiliar freedoms.

But as the euphoria fades, reasons for serious concern are emerging. Like many South Africans, I fear our leaders are repeating mistakes made in the rest of Africa — rushing along the same track, only with more bells and whistles.

The Government of National Unity is neither national nor unified; it is an uneasy five-year partnership bonded by mutual suspicion. The African National Congress (ANC) has little experience in democracy and none in running a country. The National Party for 40 years treated democracy with contempt and demonstrated how not to run a country. The jingoistic Inkatha Freedom Party is in the cabinet only to appease Zulu ambition.

Real power is in the hands of the ANC, as the party is fast discovering. But in using it the ANC reveals serious administrative inexperience. Many at the top are intelligent and capable but lower down competence is scarce. Trying to get decisions is often an exercise in frustration. The handling of crises has been hamhanded and inconsistent. Many decisions are made arbitrarily.

Senior officials frequently arrive late for appointments or never. A provincial premier angered influential businessmen by missing a luncheon he had promised to address. A cabinet minister sent his secretary to read his speech to a meeting.

The bureaucracy has swollen while its quality has declined. In addition to the numerous carry-overs from the old administration, a flock of new civil servants has been hired to run the national and nine provincial governments — each with all the paraphernalia of parliament, cabinet, departments, budgets. Many have fat salaries, houses and expensive cars. One province hired ANC loyalists as drivers at nearly five times the salary of secretaries. Ironically, they complain that they have to spend more time taking wives shopping and kids to school than driving their bosses.

The gravy train is long and crowded. Almost every week produces fresh revelations of self-enrichment at taxpayers' cost. The previous regime was also corrupt and wasteful but less blatant about it. A consultant hired by one province to reduce waste, Eugene Nyati, paid himself 1.2 million rand (about $350,000) for two months' work. Only when a newspaper front-paged the story did the embarrassed province make him pay most of it back.

ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT MENCHIN

The ordinary people watch this lavish spree with growing cynicism while their own pockets remain empty. Now their expectations — pushed impossibly high by the ANC before last year's election — are coming home to roost. We gave you the power, they say, now give us the jobs, houses, education, medical care — all free of course — as if the ANC victory had opened up some galactic cornucopia.

The ANC's promise in recent weeks that the local authorities elected earlier this month would deliver the long-awaited goods has obviously paid off. As election results trickled in, the ANC was, predictably, well ahead, though not with the landslide it claimed. In an election as complex and unprecedented as this, it is hard to spot trends. One, however, is that many blacks must have voted for opponents of the ANC or the ANC majority would have reflected the black-white population balance of 8 to 1.



The urban flowering of blacks throughout South Africa hides deep economic and social disillusionment PHOTOGRAPH: DON McPHEE

As the ANC has already found, there are far too few rewards to go around, and disillusionment is setting in. The economy is plagued by strikes for more pay. Most recently, thousands of nurses went on strike, abandoning their patients. In another incident, hundreds of unemployed demanded the repatriation of foreigners working here and the hiring of locals only. "We voted for jobs!" they cried. "Away with the BMWs!" — a reference to the rash of expensive official cars.

Realizing disillusionment could backfire on them, the ANC is trying to spread largess through an ambitious "Reconstruction and Development Program" that aims to build a million new homes, electrify 2.5 million others, create millions of jobs in the process and provide free education, medical care and other social services. One newspaper remarked that there was not one house or job to show for it.

Since then work has begun on a paltry few thousand houses, but the whole initiative has become so tangled in red tape a new structure has been created to untangle it — creating more red tape. A scheme to generate 11,000 jobs was swamped by more than 2 million applicants.

The government has at last admitted it cannot finance everything.

Township dwellers refused to pay for electricity, water and sewage for so many years in protest against apartheid it became a habit. Now the government has told them: pay or face eviction.

Standards of government services are sinking. State health care, never fully adequate, is near collapse in parts of the country. Hospitals and clinics are grossly overcrowded and understaffed. In the Eastern Cape province, health services are in chaos after wholesale theft of drugs and other stocks; water, light and sewage systems function erratically if at all; hygiene has declined perilously. Johannesburg's famed Baragwananth Hospital told patients to bring their own linen because theft had so depleted its own stocks.

State schools were opened this year to all races, but there are not enough.

Little has been done to restore the many schools torched or vandalized in protests. Standards of teaching, textbooks and equipment in formerly black schools are still abysmally low. The result: unwieldy classes, inadequate teaching and a decline in quality.

The ANC passion for the Reconstruction and Development Program, coupled with black demands, worries the business barons, although they recognize that something must be done to meet public needs. The fear is that the ANC will follow the Africa pattern — draining national coffers, misusing foreign aid, squeezing contributions from business, nationalizing industries, taking over farms, hiking taxes and milking pension, insurance and savings funds.

The 5 million whites among the 40 million population would be the first to feel the impact of such measures. If squeezed, many will emigrate; tens of thousands have already gone. The majority will stay because they have no option, but leaders of the 3 million Afrikaners have warned they can take only so much.

Already worried their land might be expropriated for redistribution, they are now angered by such steps as the prosecution of 11 senior military officers for murders committed in 1987, in spite of a general amnesty.

Foreigners are noticeably less eager to invest here than they were a year ago. The fastest booming industry, they observe, is crime. It infests the nation: corruption in government, astronomic business frauds, runaway bad debts, widespread armed robbery, freight hijackings, a burgeoning illegal drug trade, a booming car theft racket, wholesale murder. South Africa's murder rate is eight times higher per capita than America's: In the first eight months of last year 15,000 were reported.

The country is also saturated with illegal guns — 3 million by one estimate though the reality is probably twice that. Favorite is the AK-47 assault rifle, Africa's symbol of freedom.

Crime prevention is virtually nonexistent, and the security guard industry is booming nearly as fast as crime itself. Once the enforcers of apartheid, the South African Police Service is now expected to defeat crime while still being pilloried for its past sins.

A recent report from the Police Centre for Analysis and Interpretation put the backlog of unsolved crime from 1993 at 200,000 cases. Another recent study says crime is up by 30 percent while prosecutions have fallen by 7 percent.

Most victims are not white but black. In the townships and squatter camps, proper policing is almost impossible and people are at the mercy of criminals. Blacks in some regions are also afflicted by rampant political mayhem. In little more than a week in KwaZulu/Natal province, more than 40 huts were burned and dozens of people killed.

The greatest damage in South Africa in the past half century has been to basic morality. Apartheid was not exclusively responsible; the deeply ingrained societal codes once so characteristic of African peoples had begun crumbling generations earlier under the pressures of the living styles, cash economy, technology, urbanization and often conflicting moralities introduced by whites.

Apartheid dramatically accelerated the erosion by arousing black anger to the point where whites and anything to do with them became justified targets in black eyes. The contempt for law and order left by the long years of theft, killing and destruction menaces the whole of South African society.

Corruption has spread like cancer. It hits the headlines when high-profile figures are accused: the notorious Winnie Mandela and the once internationally respected Rev. Alan Boesak of misusing donations; ANC youth idol Peter Mokaba of misusing National Tourism Forum funds; politician Rockey Malebane-Metsing of signing away 12 million rand of taxpayers' money.

President Mandela himself has observed that there has been "massive corruption in which millions, if not billions, has been embezzled." At his behest the ANC set up a disciplinary committee to investigate misconduct.

There can be no security in South Africa, no peace, no faith in government, no investor confidence and no real reconstruction and development until the crime wave is stopped. It is the essential first step.

Still, there is much on the credit side, most notably the smooth way ordinary people are settling into everyday relationships. Flashpoints of friction remain, but what is forgotten, especially in the emotionalism generated by apartheid, is that white and black South Africans have been familiar for many generations, creating an often uneasy yet workable interdependence with no parallel except perhaps in Brazil.

Not even at its worst could apartheid destroy this mutuality. The chances remain reasonably good for tranquil and amicable race relations. Black and white must make concessions.

Whites must accept that the old South Africa has gone forever; Africa has stamped its personality indelibly on the country. Blacks must accept that whites are irremovably part of the scene.

Then we could have a great country.

Wilf Nussey, a freelance writer, was a foreign correspondent and editor with the Argus Group's Africa News Service for many years and editor of the Pretoria News.

Imperial glory is a thing of the past

Eurosceptics' promotion of the Commonwealth as the source of Britain's economic salvation is flawed, says **Will Hutton**

THE British Commonwealth is becoming fashionable again. It boasts five out of the 10 fastest-growing economies in the world, claim its new proponents. Commonwealth countries in the Asia-Pacific Rim provide a unique bridgehead into the world's most rapidly growing region. For Eurosceptics, the Commonwealth is an asset which Britain has for too long neglected.

It is not clear how this new importance is going to take shape — since the threat of expulsion did not stop Nigeria hanging Ken Saro-Wiwa any more than the prospect of censure at last week's Commonwealth meeting inhibited John Major's support for French nuclear testing. But that does not prevent it from being a useful artillery piece in the increasingly bitter exchanges over Britain's interests and future.

The gradual transformation in the Commonwealth's image, from a tiresome responsibility in which Britain exchanged aid for immigrants and slow-growing markets, to a potentially positive resource, has matched the rise in Conservative Euroscepticism. Tony Baldry at the Foreign Office, David Howell as chairman of the Commons foreign affairs committee and Lord Young as president of the Institute of Directors, have all recently spoken about the Commonwealth in glowing terms. Why tie ourselves to Europe when old imperial glories are waiting to be revisited?

But while it is true that the Commonwealth offers opportunities, it falls a long way short of being a genuine alternative to Britain's growing economic and political commitment to Europe. Eurosceptic zeal has got in the way of hard thinking.

None the less there is a real change afoot, and the doubts about the Commonwealth's worth have begun to be dispelled. It trapped British exporters into low-growth, low-tech markets, ran the old argument, and locked the British economy into deflation as the Treasury and Bank of England fought to maintain the convertibility of sterling area assets, held by the Commonwealth, into hard currencies.

Escaping from this nexus was an argument used by Edward Heath and then Harold Wilson to support British entry into the then Common Market. Britain needed to redirect its exports to fast-growing European markets and confront its industrial competitors head to head; competition and access to continental-sized markets would give industry just the boost it needed. The Commonwealth would be allowed to wither on the vine.

Last week the Royal Institute of International Affairs released a paper — Economic Opportunities for Britain and the Commonwealth — that is the best effort yet at rendering coherent the newly developing pro-Commonwealth case. In a global economy Britain has to think globally, argues its author, Katherine West.

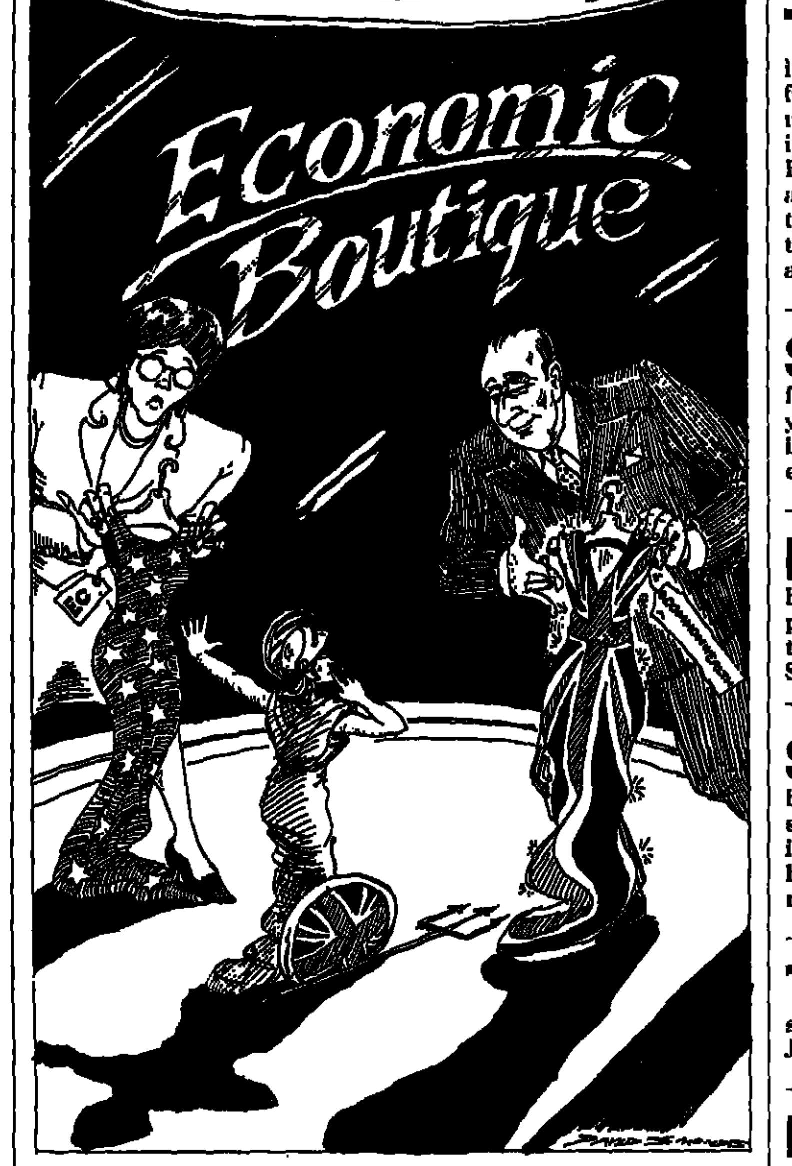
The relationship between Britain and Australia is an exemplar of why the Commonwealth still matters. Australian investment in Britain is eight times higher than it should be, given the size of the British economy, while by the same calculus British investment in Australia is seven times higher. For Australian companies, Britain provides a jumping-off point for the European single market, while a growing number of UK companies are using Australia as the headquarters of their Asia-Pacific operations.

The scale of this interpenetration mutually demonstrates, Ms West says, how useful it is to have a shared business culture at each end of the world which allows them access to great regional markets.

So far so good, but Ms West wants to go further. Europe is such a low-growth zone that Britain should reorientate its diplomatic and trade efforts to burgeoning Commonwealth markets. Here there is a familiar litany. By 2010 the Asia Pacific economy, including Japan, will surpass the combined economic weight of North America and Europe. Malaysia and Australia were strong markets for British exports in 1994, while in 1993, exports to Europe rose by only 5 per cent. Behind the trade flows there is a build-up of British direct investment, too.

The message is clear: here, and not in Europe, lies Britain's future.

But Ms West is partisan, as are Conservative Eurosceptics. It is true that 1993 was a poor year for exports to the EU. After 20 years in which the Union steadily grew as the destination of British visible exports, 1993 saw a sharp reverse, with the proportion falling from 60 per cent of the total to under 55 per cent. Europe was in recession. But in 1994, which Ms West neglects to mention, Britain's visible exports to Europe jumped by 14 per cent as the European economies recovered.



The inclusion of invisible earnings lowers the proportion of overall export earnings to below 50 per cent. But that is partly because Britain's overseas Commonwealth investments, having accumulated over 200-300 years, are so mature that the flow of dividends and profits from any pound of direct investment in the Commonwealth is significantly higher than from any pound of EU investment, so reorienting the figures.

But that has not deterred UK business, uniquely focused on making high short-term returns, from continuing to build up its investment in the EU. Business plainly believes the returns it wants lie in Europe, where the rise in direct investment is on course to match the proportion of British exports.

The investment figures for Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia are enhanced by the boom in the early 1990s, and the growth now looks much more modest.

The five Commonwealth countries that rank in the world's fastest-growing 10 economies are Mauritius, Botswana, Belize, Hong Kong and Singapore. These do not offer a serious alternative to Europe, even as examples of deeper trends, and their heterogeneity underlines the differences within the Commonwealth rather than mystical shared values. Australia is the exception, not the rule.

How should Britain act, even if it accepts the Commonwealth case? Ms West proposes more funding for Commonwealth initiatives and the establishment of a Commonwealth Global Communications Network to enable better inter-country networking. Fine. These are deserved in their own right and worth supporting, but their very modesty demonstrates the difficulty of making the Commonwealth a viable trading and political unit.

After all, what does Nigeria fear most: Commonwealth or EU trade sanctions? Britain can and should keep its Commonwealth networks alive and vigorous; but its interests and destiny remain firmly European. There is no escape to the Pacific. Geography is compelling.

In Brief

THE Bank of England set its face against a cut in borrowing costs, despite growing calls from industry for the Government to revitalise Britain's faltering economic recovery. The Bank's latest Inflation Report adopts a wait-and-see approach to interest rates on the grounds that prospects for the economy are still unclear.

SINGAPORE Airlines is to buy 77 new 777-model aircraft from Boeing over the next nine years at a total cost of up to $13 billion. Rolls-Royce is to supply engines for 61 of the planes.

BOOMING sales of cigarettes to developing countries have helped BAT Industries to record pre-tax profits of £1.8 billion in the nine months to the end of September.

SONY Corp announced an agreement with Intel to begin joint development of personal computers. Sony plans to introduce its first model of home-use PC in the US market next year.

THE rights to more than 250 Beatles songs have been sold by pop star Michael Jackson to Sony for £60 million.

PROFITS of Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB more than doubled to £50.8 million in the quarter ending September after 214,000 new UK subscribers boosted the number of paying viewers to 4.38 million.

UK BOOK sales have soared by almost 50 per cent in the four weeks since the collapse of the Net Book Agreement — the price accord among publishers — opened the way for widespread discounts. But experts calculate it is far too small to make up for the money lost by retailers.

BRITISH AIRWAYS was ordered to pay £3.5 million to 61 French passengers who were held as "human shields" in Iraq, after their flight landed in Kuwait moments after Saddam Hussein invaded in 1990.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates November 6	Sterling rates November 13
Australia	2.0935-2.0978	2.1033-2.1076
Austria	15.70-15.73	15.49-15.52
Belgium	45.85-45.96	45.28-45.38
Canada	2.1317-2.1347	2.0990-2.1020
Denmark	8.64-8.66	8.52-8.54
France	7.73-7.75	7.59-7.61
Germany	2.2321-2.2352	2.2028-2.2059
Hong Kong	12.20-12.21	12.01-12.02
Ireland	0.9762-0.9787	0.9710-0.9735
Italy	2,516-2,520	2,479-2,483
Japan	163.30-163.57	157.77-158.03
Netherlands	2.5001-2.5034	2.4693-2.4725
New Zealand	2.4078-2.4111	2.3926-2.3955
Norway	9.86-9.88	9.71-9.72
Portugal	234.64-235.27	231.77-232.40
Spain	192.44-192.73	190.19-190.48
Sweden	10.53-10.56	10.35-10.37
Switzerland	1.7980-1.8008	1.7766-1.7794
USA	1.5786-1.5796	1.5544-1.5554
ECU	1.2174-1.2191	1.2075-1.2087

FTSE100 Share Index up 22 at [illegible]. FTSE 250 Index up 9.6 at [illegible]. Gold up [illegible] at [illegible].

US budget row leads to federal shutdown

Martin Walker and Reuter

PARTS of the US federal government shut down operations early on Tuesday after President Bill Clinton confronted Republicans in Congress by vetoing their bill to raise the country's debt ceiling.

However, Republicans said a meeting at the White House late on Monday had made some progress and talks would continue on Tuesday.

"I've been to a lot of these and I think we're making a little headway," Senate majority leader Bob Dole said after the meeting. "We had a good discussion. Nobody's going to go out and beat each other up. This is serious business."

Some 800,000 non-essential employees, or 40 percent of the non-military payroll, were sent home when they reported to work on Tuesday because the federal government had no money to pay them.

Nerves on the financial markets were frayed as the dollar fell in Japan and Europe, and Treasury bond prices began edging down as Wall Street traders accused the politicians of "demoralising the market".

The prospect of a US Treasury default on the $26 billion in obligations which fell due on Wednesday remained unlikely.

However, the Republican bill threatens to make this kind of political standoff permanent, by closing the various accounting loopholes that the Treasury can employ to avoid such a default.

Each side now believes it is fighting on its own chosen ground, where it can win the battle of public opinion. The opinion polls suggest that while Republicans have broad support in their goal of balancing the budget, Clinton has even greater public backing for his staunch defence of the Medicare system.

The weakness in the Republican position is that a bickering Congress has passed only three of the 13 spending bills needed to fund the government this fiscal year, which is already six weeks old.

Bielarus turns back to face Russia again

Jean-Baptiste Naudet in Minsk

"MY HUNCH is that we're not going to be able to avoid a dictatorship here," says a glum Pavel Sheremet, the young editor of Bielorossia Delovaya Gazeta, Bielarus's main business newspaper.

A year ago the country's four independent papers were told they could no longer go on being printed in the Bielarussian capital, Minsk. Last month they were forced to find rotary presses abroad. On top of that, the state organisation in charge of distribution, which has a monopoly, refuses to handle opposition papers. The state media have long since been brought to heel, and the only independent TV channel has been closed down.

Bielarus's populist and highly authoritarian president, Alexander Lukashenko, has just decided to introduce "a political day" in the calendar of companies, so as to "inform the population of the actual situation". He is also forming a presidential guard and has just appointed loyalists to run "law-and-order organs" (the interior and defence ministries, the secret services and the security council).

After succeeding in discrediting the new parliament elected in May, the Bielarussian leader recently threatened to introduce a direct presidential system unless a sufficient number of voters went to the polls by the end of November to complete the new assembly.

Meanwhile, the president has refused to recognise the authority of the former Supreme Soviet, despite a ruling by the constitutional court. Bielarus seems set for a bumpy ride this winter, particularly as experts are predicting a grim future for the Bielarussian rouble, which has remained stable for the past year despite persistent inflation.

"In a month or two the central bank, which is spending almost £100 million a month on its interventions, will run out of reserves, and the rouble will go through the floor," warns Stanislav Bogdankevich, a widely respected economics expert, who resigned a month ago as head of the National Bank. "The president was using the institution as though it were his private bank, and none of the reform programmes had been applied," he said.

Bielarus, a small country located between the Russian Federation and Poland (or "in the heart of Europe", as they like to say here), has become the odd man out in the region. Whereas most nations in the former Soviet bloc have been fighting hard to hang on to their independence, this country of 10.5 million inhabitants seems to be doing everything in its power to abandon its sovereignty and place its destiny in Moscow's hands.

The government and most of the population fear reform and see Russia as their economic sheet anchor. They dream of "the good old days" when the Bielarussian Republic was better off than the rest of the Soviet Union because it was able to process cheap raw materials with cut-price Russian energy.

Although the customs union with Russia, which was also approved by referendum, has come into force, there is little chance of monetary union, let alone political union, between the two countries. Last year Russia cancelled an already signed draft plan for monetary union.

As a Minsk-based diplomat says: "Why buy a cow when you get the milk free? Russia already enjoys all the advantages it wants: it has a military presence, a corridor to Europe, diplomatic support and none of the usual drawbacks."

The Minsk government has been bending over backwards to please Moscow. Bielarus has been more zealous than Russia in its efforts to get the countries of the former Soviet Union to reconstitute a military bloc in order to counter Nato's "expansionism".

In a re-run, on a much smaller scale, of the Soviet Union's shooting down of a KAL airliner in 1983, Bielarus's air defences brought down a hot-air balloon which was taking part in an international competition on September 12. Two Americans were killed. The Bielarussian authorities expressed "regret" but made no official apology — and fined the two survivors $60 each on the grounds that they had entered the country without a visa.

The balloon incident was only the tip of the iceberg. There has been a government crackdown in many areas of life. At the end of August, the president signed an edict to "ensure political stability, strengthen discipline and respect for the law, and prevent illegal strikes". The decree suspended the activities of the independent trade union and lifted the immunity of parliamentary deputies and members of local assemblies.

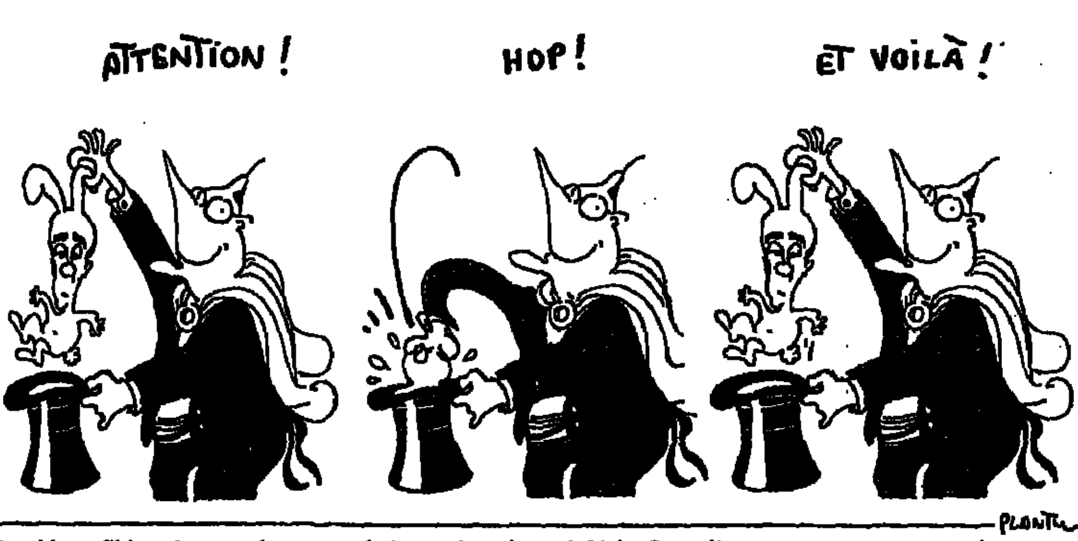
Gennady Alexandrovich Bikov, president of the suspended union, remembers wryly how he was arrested in his office on August 21 by men wearing hoods and bulletproof jackets, then given a 10-day prison sentence for having organised an "illegal strike".

In support of its demand that workers' salaries should be paid, the union's transport branch had called a strike on August 17. Some 30 people were arrested, and 82 lost their jobs. Three union leaders, including Bikov, were jailed.

Officials at the presidency prefer not to comment on such incidents. One of President Lukashenko's aides, Ural Latipov, puts down such "domestic problems" to the current separation of powers "as advocated by Montesquieu". "That separation has never been simple in any country — in Britain, parliament had the king executed," he says. He hopes, however, that in future things will be carried out "in a more civilised fashion".

Opponents of the regime are under no illusion. One of them says: "The people really think that the opposition, parliament and the constitutional court are all preventing the president from handing them happiness on a plate." That means that President Lukashenko cannot do without his opposition — which is some consolation.

(November 5/6)



President Chirac last week accepted the resignation of Alain Juppé's government . . . and promptly reappointed Juppé as premier. In slimming down his government from 41 to 32 members, Juppé sacked 13 ministers (eight of them women) and brought in only four new faces

A prime minister at last?

EDITORIAL

THE institutional set-up introduced by General Charles de Gaulle at the beginning of the Fifth Republic in 1958, under which the president oversees the prime minister he has chosen, is so fraught with ambiguity that it rarely works well. Depending on circumstances and the degree to which they have wished to distance themselves from government action, successive presidents have kept either a tight or a loose rein on their premiers.

So far in his presidency, Jacques Chirac has apparently broken new ground. All the key options decided by Prime Minister Alain Juppé, such as the spring mini-budget, the finance act for 1996 and the plan for an overhaul of the social security system, have been overseen by the president. Yet Chirac has given the impression that he does no more than lay down the broad outlines of policy, while leaving the detail to Juppé.

Like a shipowner, Chirac hires out the boat, chooses the captain, advises him on his choice of crew, fixes the objective of his voyage and allots the time he has to achieve it. It is up to the captain to chart his route, depending on currents and meteorological imponderables, so he can safely reach his destination.

Now that Chirac has at last made it clear in which direction he wishes to sail, Juppé will be able, with the November 7 cabinet reshuffle, to draw on the talents of a crew who, in theory at least, have more experience of the high seas than their predecessors. But he still has to prove his ability to weather a storm.

His first few months as premier provide absolutely no evidence that he has that ability. And his televised statement on the day of the cabinet reshuffle hardly suggested he had adopted the tack most likely to persuade public opinion to accept the sacrifices in store. His manner contrasted strikingly with Chirac's television interview 12 days earlier.

The prime minister faces a series of handicaps. He has to make people forget that he was incapable of getting his first cabinet to work properly — something which, admittedly, its composition made it difficult to do.

He has to reassure international markets made wary by the shilly-shallying of his first months in office. He has been slow — though not entirely through his own fault — in implementing a policy of austerity, and will now have to make up for lost time. And he will have to do all that without the benefit of firm and overt support from the president. All Chirac has done is keep Juppé on in the prime minister's seat. It is Juppé who has been left to say how happy he is to enjoy the support of the president.

In the best tradition of the Fifth Republic, then, Chirac can thus keep two irons in the fire. Juppé, like Pierre Mauroy in 1983, can be asked to do "the dirty work" before someone else comes along and takes the credit for it just before the general election of 1998.

Juppé may also serve the purpose, as Raymond Barre did from 1976-81, of leading the majority for just as long as it enjoys the support of the electorate. That will clearly depend on his ability to instil confidence and to show leadership — in other words, on his ability to behave, at last, like a true prime minister.

(November 9)

Czech Republic puts brakes on privatisation

Françoise Lazare in Prague

THE government of the Czech Republic, which is proud of its economic record and its success in transferring major state-owned companies to the private sector, has announced it will wind up the privatisations ministry in May 1996, a month before the general election.

Several problems face Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus, a free-market enthusiast, and his government. They cannot, for example, carry out privatisations that will result in higher electricity bills or train fares just before the election.

In the past few years the health sector has undergone considerable upheavals, which led to the resignation of Health Minister Ludek Rubas in October and his replacement by former transport minister Jan Strasky, a man known for his negotiating skills.

The country now has twice as many doctors per head of population as Germany. Pavel Veprek, head of a large Prague hospital, thinks it would now be impossible to privatise hospitals. He says that the number of beds needs to be reduced and the running of hospitals rationalised. In short, he thinks restructuring should precede privatisation, whereas the government has so far preferred to do the reverse.

If Klaus wins the election, he will have to define clearly the dividing line between the private and public sectors, and find responsible owners for newly privatised companies.

Richard Falbr, a trade union leader, notes that Klaus recently used the expression "public utilities" for the first time, that he has postponed the privatisation of hospitals, and that the unions have succeeded in getting the privatisation of the railways taken off the agenda.

Europe remains a key element of Czech economic policy. Many restructured Czech companies, which operate in a stable economic environment, want to be treated on an equal footing with EU companies. A government source says: "We need to speed things up here in view of the mechanisms set in motion in Poland and ensure that Czech industry does not seem less attractive at European level."

The government's monetary policy has come under fire. With the trade deficit widening, exporters have been calling for a devaluation of the Czech crown, which became fully convertible at the beginning of October. Finance ministry sources say that discussions are under way to authorise fluctuations of between 3 and 5 per cent against the Deutschmark, but that there is no question of floating the crown.

(November 8)

Go with the flow of time

Pascal Mérigeau on the art and artifice of Maurice Pialat's Le Garçu

THERE ARE moments in Maurice Pialat's films which apparently have nothing to do with film-making as we understand it. Take one of the restaurant scenes in his latest movie, Le Garçu. Gérard, Sophie and Jeannot sit down at a table. They are joined by Cathy. When Gérard asks her whether she would prefer a table by the window, she says she would. So everyone moves to another table.

The move does not seem to mean much. It is almost as if Pialat had had second thoughts, from a pictorial point of view, and inadvertently left traces of his indecision in the final cut. But in fact it is a directorial device, which has its significance without our realising it: the change of scenery results in Gérard and Sophie having a row.

Or perhaps one should say Gérard and Sylvie, for the Christian name of the character played by Géraldine Pailhas changes at various times in the film. That, too, is something that never normally happens in the cinema, any more than characters who look straight at the camera.

Four-year-old Antoine — played by Antoine Pialat, the son of Maurice Pialat and his co-scriptwriter wife, Sylvie Danton — stares at the camera more than once. And in a scene on the island of Mauritius where Antoine and Sophie/Sylvie are travelling on a bus, the dozens of children who laugh and scream are clearly doing so for the benefit of the camera.

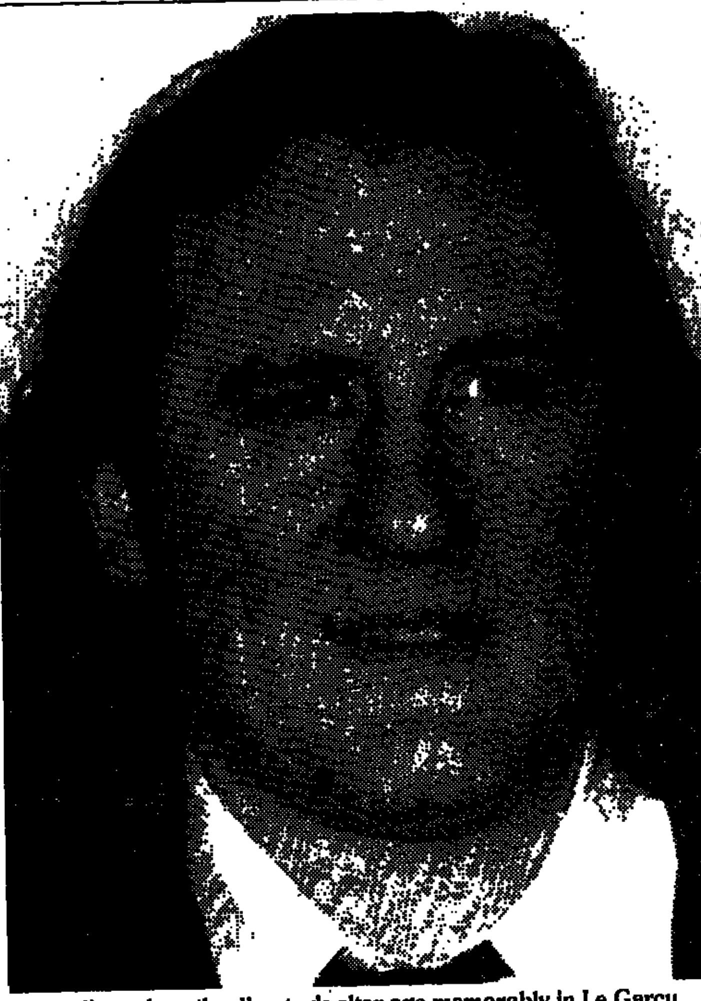
That is Pialat's way of making films. Le Garçu, his 11th movie, is like his first, L'Enfance Nue (1967), in that he sets it in a kind of space-time continuum which is very much his own property, where artifice seems to be spontaneous reality and the fictional is inseparable from the factual.

Pialat sets about filling that continuum from the start of the film, first on the sound track — we hear the voices of a child and a woman as the credits roll against a blue background — and then in the first shot, which is of a small boy in shorts careering across a white room.

After that, we see the boy and his mother playing on a bed, without yet knowing who they are or where we are — except that we are in a Pialat film, because actors do not talk like that in other people's movies, and no one else films them in this way.

Then we are gradually able to take our bearings: this must be the flat in Paris where Gérard (Gérard Depardieu), Sophie and Antoine live; the next moment, they are on holiday in Mauritius, or at the Vendée seaside resort of Sables-d'Olonne for the weekend. We know where we are, but never exactly when.

When Cathy (Fabienne Babe) makes her appearance, she clambers into Gérard's bed. Later on, there is a scene where they seem to be meeting for the first time. Is it a flashback? Not really, because to have a flashback the narrative has to have a present, and there is no present in Le Garçu. There is no past either, but rather such a tight interweaving of present and past that they inexorably point to the future.


Depardieu: plays the director's alter ego memorably in Le Garçu

"I have never looked at a child without reflecting that he will become an old man, or a cradle without thinking of a grave," Gustave Flaubert wrote in a letter to Louise Colet. That child in Le Garçu is Antoine, whom Pialat films as though trying to hold back the march of time. "Good God, how time flies!" Gérard says as he looks at photos of Antoine when he was younger.

About 15 minutes before the end of the film, as a distraught Depardieu contemplates his dead father lying on a bed in a clinic, we learn that the *garçu* of the title (a patois word for *garçon*) is neither Antoine, nor Gérard, but Gérard's father. "That's it," his father had scrawled on a piece of paper before dying.

LATER, as the body is placed in a coffin and nuns launch into a hymn, Gérard has to stifle a laugh and wishes he had realised that the shroud automatically consisted of a sheet of plastic unless the customer advised otherwise.

Gérard picks up his father's overnight case, which is full of letters, his wallet, a few photos, his toothbrush and a bottle of eau-de-Cologne. His death bed has already been filled by another dying man.

This sequence, which is like a film within a film, throws light on what has preceded and changes our perception of what follows, which is neither different nor the same — like the water of a pond which, as Sophie remarks, either remains still or flows, depending on the spot.

Nothing shifts, yet there is a flow which Pialat captures without altering its direction, which he controls without harnessing, and which leads him from one scene to the next, or from one movie to its predecessor or successor.

In the sequence where Pialat films the grimly mechanical dancing of those who cater to the desires of other people, prompting obscene comments and sexist jibes, one is reminded of the brothel scene in his previous film, Van Gogh, where a whiff of the end of the world and the imminent death of mankind can also be detected.

Gérard is loud and outsized, like the electric lorry he buys Antoine, not so much to delight his son as to prove to himself and others that he is alive and kicking.

He has become a millstone, as Sophie points out to him, particularly now he no longer serves any purpose. At the end of the film Gérard is on the far side of a pane of glass, watching a movie from whose first scene he was excluded and which, if it were not about to end, would continue without him. The final shot homes in on Sophie.

By erasing his alter ego, Pialat closes the door on his own life, which he had left ajar for a moment (focusing on his child, his father's death and elements of his earlier films). The private and confessional tone that is so strongly in evidence throughout Le Garçu has less to do with its directly autobiographical dimension than with Pialat's unique and deeply moving way of unburdening himself: he imposes his presence, as an invisible actor, on a work of which he is at once the creator and the spectator, and which seems to reveal itself to him as he directs it.

This stripping of the threads of life is reflected in the symbolic, almost initiatory denuding of Gérard and Sophie before they offer themselves to each other. Pailhas, Depardieu, Babe and Dominique Rocheteau (a former football star) as Jeannot, all give memorable performances.

More particularly, Depardieu's sense of humour, combined with his ability to give himself totally to a part and to a director while remaining himself, and the force that emanates from Pailhas as she suffers a flurry of humiliations and insults somehow create the right conditions for the laughing and carefree Antoine Pialat to put across the message of the film: that hope must always spring eternal.

(November 1)

Cut and paced job

Maurice Pialat talks to **Jean-Michel Frodon** about movie-making

WHEN YOU visit Maurice Pialat at his home in the foothills of the Pyrenees, he is warm and outgoing — the complete opposite of the snarling and tyrannical director of legend. He is someone who commits himself totally to each film, and therefore cannot understand or tolerate anyone else telling him what he should do.

For him, the only valid cinematic genre is popular cinema. His happiest memory as a director is of the big queues he saw outside cinemas that were showing his only real box-office success, Nous Ne Vieillirons Pas Ensemble (1972).

It emerged casually from our conversation that some of the shots in Le Garçu were directed not by him but by his wife Sylvie. How was it that a director who embodied the most personal type of cinema could allow someone else to shoot certain scenes? Pialat feels that an auteur is not necessarily the person who controls every detail of a film, but rather the person who sets his or her stamp on it.

He agreed he was a "realistic" director. "But often, when that term is used, I get the feeling it means 'limited' or 'unimaginative' — yet another misunderstanding." He regards his film Police (1985) as a failure, because he broke the rules of the genre he wanted to respect.

Pialat, who is 70, more than once expressed frustration at the fact that he had made so few films (11 in 26 years). He touched on the subject of death, which is never absent from his movies, and alluded to the health problems that slowed down the preparation of Le Garçu and affected the shooting of it: "I fell several times while we were making it. I could have killed myself, but luckily I know how to fall."

The starting point for Le Garçu was Pialat's stint as a sales rep in the fifties, first for a pharmaceutical laboratory, then for a typewriter company. That was the setting he chose for a film about a man and a woman who eventually became Sophie and Jeannot in Le Garçu. But in the final version of the script, Pialat eliminated the sales-rep background and also changed details of the death of his father — "the most autobiographical scene in Le Garçu".

Then a degree of urgency entered the equation: Pialat wanted to film his own son Antoine, so the emphasis of the screenplay was shifted to give the boy and his father (Depardieu) a more important role. "I wanted to film Antoine when he was that age," says Pialat. It was impossible to wait any longer, as four-year-old children change too fast.

"I didn't direct Antoine at all. We didn't rehearse any scenes. I just tried to create play situations that enabled him to do what he wanted within the framework of the film. I didn't want any soppy teddy-bear scenes or anything."

In a way, Antoine was the ideal actor for a director like Pialat: "I like movies to get made almost on automatic pilot. I like actors to take the initiative."

Pialat had no problems with Depardieu, who in the course of the four films on which they have worked together, starting with Loulou (1980), has become Pialat's virtual alter ego, despite some serious rows between the two men: "I don't direct him, he does it all by himself. I think that during the whole shooting of the film I must have given him only two indications as to how I wanted him to act."

To his surprise, Pialat also found himself on the same wavelength as Géraldine Pailhas, whom he met by chance during an evening of César awards [the French equivalent of the Oscars]. She was reluctant to be screen-tested. Pialat thinks that, thanks to her performance, Sylvie in Le Garçu is "the most successful of all my female characters".

Pialat's films are prepared in immense detail — his screenplays are often extremely bulky — but can be influenced by random events on set. And even the shooting of a film, for him, is merely a process of collecting "material". The final construction of the movie, which is particularly complex in the case of Le Garçu, "was entirely worked out at the cutting stage".

Pialat hired Hervé de Luze, an editor with much experience of films with a highly classical narrative style (such as Claude Berri's): "I left him on his own for three months, and only then did I turn up in the cutting room. The structure of the movie was devised at that point, but the elements were already there."

Sometimes the very existence of those elements had been left to chance: "I wasn't sure I really wanted to go to Mauritius. A week before we were due to leave, I tossed a coin and it told us to go. And for once I hadn't cheated."

It is far from certain that after Le Garçu, a film where the director's sensibilities are very thinly disguised, Pialat will stick for good to making movies set in modern times. He is still obsessed with a subject which he has had a go at, then abandoned, at least 10 times: the Occupation, "about which no one has told the truth". He is deeply hurt and angry when people suspect him of being soft on the Vichy regime.


Pialat: leaving things to chance

He told me about his project for a film on the subject, called Lyon, described his own experience of those dark years and refused to excuse the novelist Louis-Ferdinand Céline's anti-Semitism on the grounds of his literary talent. In other words, reports that Maurice Pialat is now world-weary and at peace with himself are way off the mark.

(November 1)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

Power of Babel

It's your friends who matter, not your nationality, say the new Euro-kids. **Roger Tredre** reports

THEY SPEAK two or more languages fluently, have friends from a dozen countries, go "home" a couple of times a year to see their grandparents, and think Michael Portillo a very bad joke indeed.

These are the Euro-kids. Despite increasing antagonism on the political right towards European integration, a generation of children is growing up inculcated with European values. There are 3,500 of them at the European School in Uccle, south Brussels, mostly children of EU officials.

Alexandra Pledge, a 16-year-old British pupil, said: "My parents came here 20 years ago. We go to see my grandmother in Leamington Spa, but the country where you live is not really relevant. It's where your friends are that matters."

The Euro-kids are living the European dream. Their school's philosophical *raison d'être* is sealed, in parchment, into the foundation stones: "Educated side by side, untroubled from infancy by divisive prejudices, acquainted with all that is great and good in the different cultures, it will be borne in upon them as they mature that they belong together. Without ceasing to look to their own lands with love and pride, they will become in mind Europeans, schooled and ready to complete and consolidate the work of their fathers before them, to bring into being a united and thriving Europe."

The linguistic proficiency of the children is astonishing. The playground babble switches between two, three, four languages, sometimes in a single conversation.

A class of nine- and 10-year-olds, all multilingual, talked happily about learning more languages. Erica Tirr, who described herself as Italian and English, spoke Italian, English and French, and wanted to learn German. Charles Gosme (French and Scottish) wanted to tackle German and Greek. Lisa Clarke, who was English and had lived in Tanzania, fancied Swahili.

The British pupils see no contradiction between being European and British. One teenager said: "I feel European with hints of Englishness."

Emily Cox, aged 17, said: "I feel English and I read English writers, but if you don't live in the culture they can see you as a stranger. You can't talk about the latest episode of Brookside."

This sense of alienation may be a downside of the European experience. John Bulwer, a teacher who wrote a university thesis on the subject, suggested: "It's possible that European-ness consists to a certain extent of losing clearly identifiable national characteristics."

But Brigid Graumann, editor of the the Bulletin, a Belgian English-language weekly, welcomes this. An Irish passport holder, she has lived most of her life in Belgium. "I very definitely feel European. Real Irish people don't consider me Irish, Belgians don't consider me quite Belgian. When I was a child I envied other children their roots in one country, but now I see my situation as an asset. I elect my roots, I'm genuinely independent."


Language is no barrier . . . Students of the European School at Eccle, Brussels
PHOTOGRAPH: JEROME de PERLINGHI

Ms Graumann shares the views of many teenagers at the European School on the British in Britain: "They're are often very insular. Their jokes seem so xenophobic. I can't empathise with them."

Michael Leahy, aged 35, an advertising copywriter, another Irish passport holder and a former pupil of the European School, said: "From over here, the level of anti-European feeling in Britain is very alarming. What's most extraordinary is this feeling that Euro-this or Euro-that implies non-English. But the two are not incompatible."

The school's teachers strongly deny breaking down national identity. Headmaster John Marshall said: "All cultures are equal. Every child should feel respected."

The structure of the school is geared towards realising the vision of its founders. The pupils are never taught history or geography in their mother tongue. Mr Marshall explained: "The idea is that you become more objective about your own country and outward-looking towards other countries."

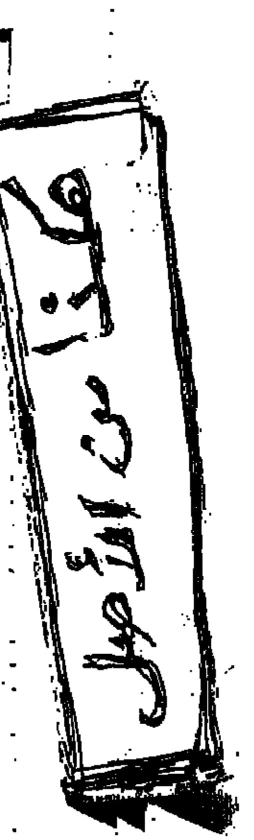
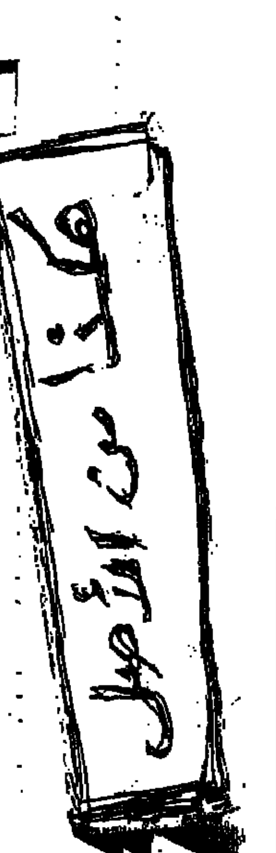
Mr Marshall has given short shrift to recent attempts by the Greek government to have Greek history taught in Greek to Greek pupils. "It's not that we are trying to change anyone's views, but we want to expose them to other views, to cut down attempts by governments to manipulate."

MR LEAHY added a note of realism: "You still get prejudice at the school. Yes, the Germans are still considered boring, the French pompous, the Italians hot-blooded. But it doesn't stop you making friends with these nationalities. With time, nationality becomes an irrelevance."

Every year, some 90 children from the school go to British universities, of whom only a third are of UK origin. Mr Marshall said: "They don't worry about boundaries or borders. A substantial number of them will do a couple of years in one country and then go to another country to finish off."

For a lesson in broadmindedness, the playground of the European School certainly takes some beating.

The headmaster was in agreement: "It's very impressive when you hear them arguing politically. Nothing is black or white because they're all too aware of other views. If you listen to the British press, you'd think there were only two views of everything." — *The Observer*

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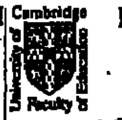
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Closing date: 15th December 1995.

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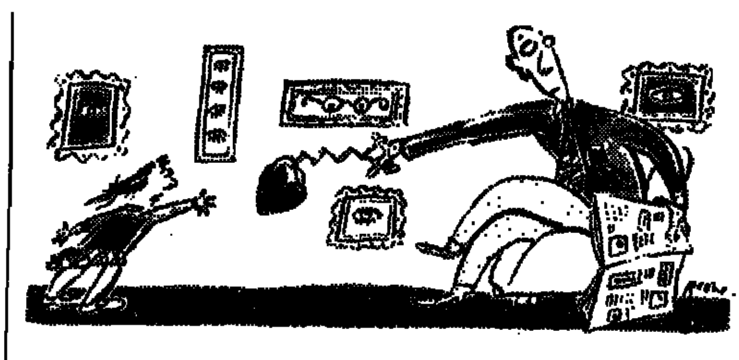
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A testing time for innocence

Suzanne Moore argues that adults should stop protecting their own idea of childhood and start protecting actual children



THERE is no question that Julia Somerville's daughter has been subject to indecent and abusive behaviour — and it has nothing to do with any photographs. It is being identified in the press and if ever there was a invasion of privacy this was it.

Yet, "there but for the grace of God go I" discussions have been taking place everywhere since the TV newsreader had to endure police questioning over her family photographs. Parents know they, too, have taken pictures of naked children. I certainly have. We have asked ourselves and each other how old the child might be when this starts to feel uneasy. And we have found no satisfactory answer except that it might be around the age of the girl in this case — seven.

Some people have reacted angrily to what they see as a conspiracy of politically correct photographic processors shopping innocent families to the police. Filth is in the eye of the beholder. But we already know that paedophiles can get off on pictures of children in underwear in catalogues. We know that they have their own dark-rooms in which to develop their dark fantasies.

Parents know that they do what they do in good faith. Pictures of naked children are innocent, we say, because children are innocent and we must protect innocence at all costs. Yet the argument that the NSPCC made last week has not been widely supported — "It is better to take a risk and to be wrong than not to and leave a child to suffer years of abuse" — but then this is an organisation that works to protect children and which deals daily with children who have been damaged beyond repair. We live in a climate, remember, in which we are told by commentators that the figures for child abuse are simply wrong. It is as if we would rather protect our idea of childhood than protect actual children.

Sometimes I don't know what this concept of innocence does for children. They become blank screens on which we project our idealisations in order to deny what is obvious to everyone who has been in close contact with a child. Children are sexual beings. This may not be the time to insist that they are, but I must. Let's be clear — to say children are sexual beings does not mean that they want to have sex or that we should want to have sex with them. It does not mean they should not be protected. It does not mean they can give what we understand to be consent. It simply means that we cannot continue to talk as though adults have sexuality and children have none. We could have a frank and, yes, even adult discussion about what constitutes a sexual image of a child if we were prepared to be truthful.

In public, however, there are only two positions: presumed guilt (nudity equals sex equals obscenity) or presumed innocence (there is never any erotic content in pictures of naked children taken by their families). We know in our hearts that it is more complicated than that.

Male friends have told me of being made uncomfortable by the flirtatious behaviour of nine-year-old girls, or of not being able to talk to a lost child for fear of being seen as an abuser. Stepfathers, that growing breed, often find it difficult to know how intimate they should be with their partner's children. Their vigilance is, unfortunately, necessary. Children are taught that if they are lost or scared they must find "a lady or a policeman", never an ordinary man. This is a sad state of affairs but we know why this has come about.

There is, though, a growing concern about the sexualisation of all imagery. Recent research shows that British men are unhappy with the increasing portrayal of male bodies as objects of desire. It makes them feel inadequate. This is a feeling that women know so well that we have almost given up complaining about it. In spite of all this, there is a degree of consensus about how far we should go. No one really bothered to defend Calvin Klein's recent advertising campaign which featured adolescents in sexually provocative poses. People remain rightly suspicious that advertisers will do anything to grab attention.

WHILE THE Klein campaign was erotically explicit, all such content must be erased from what we consider to be family photographs. Photographer Sally Mann's beautiful and disturbing pictures of her own children have been highly controversial. There have been calls for censorship — for we know too that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

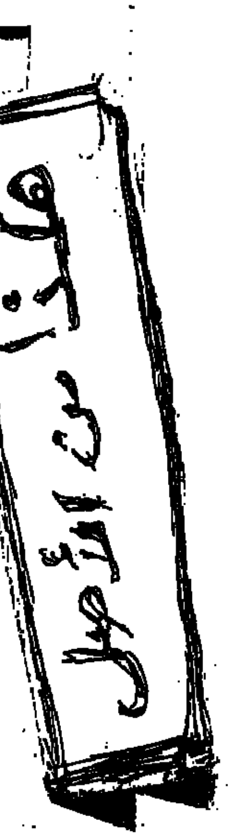
What is compelling about Mann's work is that the erotic charge comes from the maternal eye and the children clearly like posing for her, as children do. The maternal and erotic instincts are seen culturally as mutually exclusive. These are not spontaneous snapshots but carefully planned photographs that intertwine them. I would defend her right to take them but I would not deny that there are sexual elements to the pictures . . . and, yes, I would be extremely uncomfortable if anyone other than the children's mother had taken them.

To get beyond the question of innocent children and guilty adults, however, or to pretend that everything that happens within families is entirely innocent and devoid of any kind of sexuality, we should be able to talk about what sort of behaviour is and isn't appropriate. Often, I have seen situations where children start imposing rules on their more liberal parents. They do not want to undress in front of anyone else and they make it clear that they would prefer their parents to cover themselves up. Once a child is self-conscious about being naked, perhaps it is time to stop taking photographs of them. Would this be such a great curtailing of liberty? Would it destroy family life? Should we ask ourselves whether we take more pictures of naked girl children than we do of boys? And if so why?

One could, instead, argue that we should be more comfortable with our bodies and stop seeing nudity as inherently sexual — but this is not going to happen overnight. While complaining that there is too much sex around, we cannot feign surprise that the so-called innocence of children ends earlier and earlier.

Rather than suggesting more self-imposed limitations on already confused parents, I would rather parents talk more openly about this whole ambivalent area. To do so, however, would mean admitting that maybe, just maybe, we are not all as innocent as we would like to believe we are. Perhaps we never were. Such an admission would not mean that we are guilty, merely that we are grown up. And what a long way off we are from that.





An actor in his prime

OBITUARY
Paul Eddington

Eddington . . . an actor devout in his profession PHOTOGRAPH: JANE BOWN

THE ACTOR Paul Eddington has died, aged 68, just when his career appeared unassailable. Only 10 years ago he reported feeling still "the new boy" — "then people suddenly started calling me 'Sir' and finding me chairs."

A quiet, modest man, he achieved sudden, late elevation after a solidly respectable stage career thanks largely to fame brought about by the seventies' TV sit-com The Good Life. This was quickly followed by Yes, Minister when, as the hesitant Jim Hacker, Eddington's niche in the nation's affections was assured.

Born in north London of Quaker and Catholic parents, he was sent to a Quaker co-educational boarding school where he learned how to "sit still for long periods without fidgeting". It was a skill that never left him and which he demonstrated with luminous quality in his last stage appearance in Home when, as the geriatric resident, he stared out in perfect stillness at the audience.

Eddington left school at 17 without qualifications, and began his acting career in 1944 with Ensa. His first job was at the Colchester Garrison Theatre.

In the early years and in some financial hardship, he did think of giving up. But his wife Patricia, whom he married in 1952, insisted she had married an actor, not a salesman. So he continued, working with leading repertory companies, on Broadway (in 1964 in the adaptation of Iris Murdoch's A Severed Head) and for short spells at Chichester, with the RSC and the National. There were also appearances in many of the other TV staples of the past two decades.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, he starred in and created West End roles in several new plays, including Michael Frayn's Donkey's Years, and Noises Off, and Alan Bennett's Forty Years On.

In recent years, though steadily undermined by cancer, he reached a level of performance in plays such as the revival of Pinter's No Man's Land and Storey's Home that confirmed him as an actor in his prime.

Fiercely protective of his privacy, he did not relish "going public" about his illness. His marriage to Patricia gave him great happiness. They had four children.

Carol Woddis

Paul Eddington, actor, born June 18, 1927; died November 4 1995

Letter from Provence Peter Squibb

In the line of fire

THE OLD man had tears tumbling down his face; his hands shook violently and his voice was barely audible through his sobs: "We've been friends since primary school; we were in the Resistance together. We went to each other's weddings. We've been hunting together every Sunday after mass for years and years. I thought he was behind me. I thought he was the boar. He was behind the bushes, just where a boar would have been. I knew as soon as I'd fired that something was wrong." He had been charged with involuntary homicide. It was yet another hunting accident.

Sometimes it's not an accident. A schoolteacher's dog was blinded in one eye not 100 yards from his house; an elderly lady saw a *chasseur* step over her garden wall and take aim at one of her cats, which was dead before she could shout out.

Of course, these are the exceptions. We have one good friend who can't understand why we persistently refuse his offers of a jar of home-made thrush paté. And another who maintains he only hunts to keep his eye in for when the revolution comes.

One summer, several years ago, our younger daughter worked for a farmer who was an official of the hunt. She was living in her caravan on a hillside above his farmhouse. One day she was sitting on her primitive toilet between some trees when she heard grunting. Two large wild boars were snuffling their way towards her. While she was deciding if she had time to pull up her pants and climb a tree before they attacked, she saw plastic tags in their ears. They had just been released by the *éleveurs* who breed a variety of animals and birds for the hunt. They shuffled and grunted around her and slowly moved on, obviously very accustomed to people.

Later that night her boss called her. He had shot one of the beasts and, as it was still several weeks before the hunt officially opened, it had to be disposed of. She took a wheelbarrow up the hill to the scene of the crime. They covered the blood on the ground with sand, and pushed the body back to the house, where she and the wife set about butchering it. There was too much meat to go in their own freezer so trusted friends were called to come and take it away.

I have no objection to the principle of hunting. I have in my time shot and netted rabbits in Somerset and Yorkshire and I used to enjoy angling despite a conspicuous lack of success. To be honest, I think I would even enjoy a boar hunt on the wooded slopes of Mont Ventoux. But I would be deterred by the memory of the two boar-gored dogs bleeding from stomach wounds that we saw at the vet's where we took our own dog who had been poisoned from meat put down by the *garde de chasse* to kill foxes.

ON THE DAYS when *la chasse* is permitted, particularly Sundays, shots ring out all around us and the land is covered with cartridge cases which our grandchildren love to collect. Over the years I have asked passing *chasseurs* if they have shot anything and almost always they say, sadly, that they have seen nothing.

At the beginning of each season the press is full of articles explaining that *la chasse* is environmentally sound; that the *chasseurs* are greener than Greenpeace; and that hunting comes second only in sanctity to the French language itself.

For some of the younger hunters the hunt is a fashion parade: chic urban guerrillas stroll proudly between the vines talking animatedly and firing in all directions. They lack respect for the laws governing hunting: no shooting within 150m of houses and one's back always to be turned on any habitation. We often get lead pellets clattering on to the roof.

But I'm not really complaining: our dog has caught a very edible hare and rabbit, which is more than the hunters seem to do.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***WHEN WILL* continental drift (Britain is supposedly drifting towards the US) begin to have an effect on the Channel tunnel?**

NEVER. The attachment of Britain to the rest of Europe was a geological reality millions of years before it became a late 20th century political issue. The Channel is simply part of the continental shelf which underlies the shallow seas around northern Europe and there is little possibility of significant movements in the Earth's crust between Britain and France which could affect the Channel tunnel. As for Britain drifting towards the US, the opposite is the case. As a result of continental drift, the width of the North Atlantic is steadily increasing by 2-3 cm a year. In reality the US is drifting away from Britain. — *Tom Davies, Austin, Texas*

SOONER than you think: in a tunnel, you cannot use "leaves on the track" or "snow on the line" to explain away train delays. — *Faron Moller, Uppsala, Sweden*

AT ABOUT the same time as it becomes profitable. — *Richard Scrase, Bath, Avon*

***WHY IS* a kangaroo court so called?**

BECAUSE it jumps to the wrong conclusions. — *Angela Green, Bonn, Germany*

KANGAROO courts were originally held in prisons and have no legal standing. The offender was summarily disciplined by the "kangaroo club" of long-serving inmates — as powerful, in their spheres, as the prison officers (known as screws). The rhyming slang for screw is kangaroo. In addition, kangaroos are thought, erroneously, to make no audible sound. The offender is given no chance to speak in his own defence.

The earliest record of the usage is 1860, but it obtained wide currency in the 1960s when applied to the irregular punitive measures taken by certain trade unions. — *Brian Palmer, St Albans, Hertfordshire*

***THE WORD* "cleave" has two opposite meanings — either to stick together or to split apart. What are the origins of this contradiction, and are there other words that do the same thing?**

HOW about the word "conserve": to save or protect (the countryside) as in conservation; or to destroy or dismantle (the country) as in Conservatives. — *Guy Johnston, Kirchhundem, Germany*

LEFT can be interpreted as "departed" or "remaining". — *Luke Williams, Sydenham, London*

CHAMBERS explains "overlook" as both "to view carefully" and "to fail to notice". Dana in Two Years Before The Mast often uses the word "stand" to mean the movement of a ship. — *John Orford, Balingasag, Philippines*

***WHO* invented the bowler hat and what was the inspiration behind its unique shape?**

THE BOWLER has its origins in the Cook's or Coke's hat. It was created to protect gamekeepers injuring themselves as they tore through the undergrowth during pheasant shoots. They needed a smart, presentable hat with a stout brim and solid crown that would protect the head, could be worn comfortably all day and would not need a chin strap to keep it on. It needed to be an exact fit, which is why a proper bowler hat is custom made with the use of a measuring device that gives a paper template of the customer's head. The original Cook's was dark brown, not black. — *Harry Sigerson, Tokyo, Japan*

***IN ITALY* a *fiasco* is what you buy Chianti in, so how did it acquire the English meaning?**

ACCORDING to Brewer, *fiasco* was a Venetian slang term for glass-blowing that had gone wrong. The word was adopted by theatre and opera audiences as a term of abuse shouted at artists who had failed to hit the right notes.

Chianti bottles have a spherical body which needs a raffia cradle in which to sit. Presumably, fiasco is something which attempts a spectacular outcome but which is so feebly executed that it cannot stand up straight without external support. — *Colin Pilkington, Ormskirk, Lancs*

Any answers?

WHY DOES* my stubble grow faster when I travel by plane? — *Peter Pappamikail, Brussels

WHY DO* the cockroaches in our bathroom always die on their backs? Is this a universal cockroach characteristic, and do some other insects or animals do the same? — *Anna Griffiths, Cabo Delgado, Mozambique

WHERE CAN* I find recordings of the Internationale and the old Soviet national anthem? — *Tony King, Oxford

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. Volume 6 is now available (£6.99)

A Country Diary

Michael Binnie

KARACHI: One of the charms of city life in Pakistan is the presence of the countryside within it in the shape of its domestic animals. Apart from Islamabad there isn't a city without its horse-drawn taxis, called tongas, and here in Karachi anything from computers to bananas is likely to be delivered by camel or donkey cart. Goats, sheep, ducks and hens wander freely about the busy streets and one is as likely to be woken up in the morning by cock crow as by the roar of traffic.

One evening my bus was held up on the edge of the city by a convoy of lorries carrying freshly cut grass. On inquiring I was told that the lorries were bound for the Buffalo Colony, the latter word describing a residential area for workers of a particular occupation, for instance, Railway Colony or No 3 Sweeper Colony. A few days later a friend who teaches in the Buffalo Colony took me there.

All the children in my friend's school were from the families of buffalo workers and, as it happened, Christians, one time converts from the lowest castes of Hindus. Someone took me on a tour of the buffalo yards and we seemed to walk for miles. Some of the yards had perhaps 50 animals and others many hundreds. Attached to the yards were lines of one-roomed houses: unlike Europe, this is a labour-intensive industry and all the milking is done by hand. Beside each yard was a large dung heap, from which all colony residents were free to help themselves. Every household cooked on dry dung.

Though some Karachi families own their own buffaloes, the bulk of the city's milk comes from this enormous, metropolitan factory farm. This was mid-morning and a slack time. Small knots of milkers were squatting in groups and gossiping while thousands of buffaloes peacefully chewed the cud, slowly manufacturing the next day's supplies.

Aces in Melbourne's winning hand

THEATRE
Michael Billington

MY FIRST impression of this year's Melbourne Festival was a weird one. Going for a Sunday morning stroll, I passed three men in orange body-stockings and cockatoo hair who struck silver thimbles across their washboard stomachs: a street theatre group called Chrome IV. Then, on the bustling riverside terraces, I came across a mysterious Pied Piper trailed by a self-propelling geranium-covered box and a horde of curious children. I later hopped on a tram festooned with botanical greenery.

Melbourne, compared with Sydney, is often thought of as a sober, strait-laced city: not, however, during festival time.

But it would be wrong to imply that Melbourne's annual arts jamboree is dominated by the wild and wacky. It started 10 years ago as an offshoot of Menotti's Spoleto Festival. Now, under the direction of Leo Schofield, it has acquired a character of its own, successfully bridging the gap between the highbrow and the populist.

Two British companies dominated the drama programme. Complicité's The Three Lives Of Lucie Cabrol was received ecstatically (in fact, it won the local critics' award for excellence); Cheek by Jowl's new production of The Duchess Of Malfi (opening at Wyndham's Theatre, London, on January 2) rather more guardedly.

Part of the latter's problem, I suspect, was the audience's unfamiliarity with the play. During the interval I was chatting with a top banana from ABC TV and a local playwright, who looked appalled when I casually mentioned that the Duchess dies in Act Four: it was as if I'd given away the ending of an Agatha Christie thriller. Against that there was the jolly suburban lady I sat next to who leaned across at the end and said, "Better than Home And Away!"

Quite a lot better. The great thing about Declan Donnellan's radical revisionist production is that it brings out the psychological and political modernity of Webster's gory Jacobean masterpiece. The implied setting is a pre-war Mussoliniesque Italy torn between the dictates of fascism and the rituals of Catholicism: the Duchess's sinister brothers are first seen praying, amid a welter of Hail Marys, over her husband's coffin and Bosola's black shirt conceals a discreet crucifix. Donnellan economically evokes a hierarchical, religious world high on cruelty and sexual torment: one in which the Cardinal's mistress anally rapes Bosola with a loaded pistol.



Critical acclaim ... Lilo Baur in Complicité's The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol, which captured an award for excellence at the Melbourne Festival PHOTOGRAPH: HENRIETTA BUTLER

But the most startling feature of the production is Anastasia Hille's Duchess. In place of the usual persecuted martyr we get a tetchy, sexy, chain-smoking neurotic who seduces her steward with disdainful ease but whose real emotional life is with her twin brother, Ferdinand. The same idea underscored the recent Greenwich, London, production; but here it is pushed to the limits with Hille nestling erotically in her brother's lap and Scott Handy's Ferdinand thrusting a dead hand into his sister's as if it were a mad childhood prank.

But festivals are not just about one-off events: they are also about meaningful juxtapositions. Melbourne's admirable Playbox Theatre had the bright, ambitious idea of bringing together two plays about the crimes attendant on war. Tanaka Chikao's The Head Of Mary is a 1958 Japanese play about Nagasaki here played by Australian actors; John Romeril's The Floating World is a 1974 Australian classic about memories of the Burma railway played by a Japanese company. Seeing the two plays back to back in a bilingual double-bill, one got a strong sense of shared guilt and atonement.

I have to admit that Tanaka's play made me uneasy: dealing with a group of Catholic believers trying to abscond with the shattered pieces of a statue of the Virgin Mary, it seemed to imply that the bomb dropped on Nagasaki was an act of God rather than the result of a military-political decision.

But The Floating World was a remarkable study in Brechtian alienation. Here was a group of Japanese actors telling the story of a xenophobic Australian ex-PoW who relives his horrific memories of wartime capture. It was not only a fine production by Makoto Sato. Something beyond theatre was happening. It was as if a group of Japanese actors was seeking absolution for the crimes committed by a previous generation: I found it deeply moving.

My belief that people go to festivals not just to enjoy but to listen and learn was also confirmed by a whole series of Melbourne events. Robert Hughes's lecture on Art and Identity, which packed out Melbourne Town Hall, took up many of the themes of his recent book, The Culture Of Complaint: the dangers of using art to re-affirm tribal identity, the loony excesses of American political correctness (a concert performance of Peter And The Wolf was recently stopped because it was thought to give a negative image of wolves), and the premature canonisation by galleries of unhatched young artists ("It's like chucking eggs in the air," said Hughes, "and admiring the grace of their flight").

No less stimulating was An Evening With Ricky Jay: a bearded, Wellesian sleight-of-hand artist — he was in Mamet's House Of Games — who exercises magical fingertip control over playing-cards. He was one of the aces in Melbourne's pack and offered simultaneously entertainment and a potted history of deception: living proof that the best festivals (and Melbourne now rates high on the international calendar) are not just a random collection of yum-yum artistic thrills but places where we go to watch and learn at the same time.

Swept along on a tide of emotions

DANCE
Judith Mackrell

IT'S THE music, as always, that sets the tone for Siobhan Davies's new double bill of dance at Sadler's Wells. In Wild Translations, set to Kevin Volans's Fifth String Quartet, the music's driving staccato seems to grab the dancers in its fist, lifting them around the stage as they kick and wheel to escape its grasp, their limbs jack-knifing with ferocious energy. Suddenly, the music lightens to thin, distinct sounds and the dancers are let loose on their own meditations.

The piece seems to be about memory. Sections of Volans's score are overlaid with the noise of children, insects and farm machinery. A delicate splaying of fingers conjures up slow, dusty heat, two women companionably shift their weight against each other, while some remembered horror jolts another into a distressed sideways leap. The pulse of Davies's choreography keeps her seven dancers moving between intricately sculpted groups.

For the Art Of Touch, Davies gets a totally different energy from a series of Scarlatti keyboard sonatas, a hard combative dynamism that sets the dancers chasing each other round the stage, raising their fists. At moments there's a devilish energy to this, but at others the dance seems to get caught on a treadmill.

It's with the the other sections of the score, Matteo Fargion's Sette Canzoni for amplified clavichord, that Davies's invention sparks again. In quieter passages the dancers explore all the shades and textures of touching — from hands shaken at each other like pocket handkerchiefs to a whirling waltz. It is beautiful and bizarre, and Davies has never done anything like it before.

How many different ways can you perform a single jazz tune? It's hard to tell whether it was love or curiosity that made Richard Alston want to ferret out 11 different versions of Hoagy Carmichael's 1927 classic Stardust and then set a major new work to them all.

There is, after all, a lot riding on this one small tune and on the dance, Sometimes I Wonder, that it has inspired. It's the latest presentation from the *Richard Alston Dance Company*, now on tour, and it has to live up to the success of their debut season last year.

Alston seems to be trying to get at the essence of the song but also to play with the multiple rhythms, colours and tempos of its re-incarnations.

The problem with all the wonderful dance, though, is that it doesn't grab the audience. Alston is determined to let the movement speak for itself — not to ham up the emotion or have the dancers flirting with the public. But the whole history of this song speaks of night clubs and dance halls, of glamour, sex and entertainment. There's a hit dying to be let out but this isn't quite it.

A right carry on, sergeant

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

DO TRY to concentrate. We have **Roughnecks** (BBC1) and then we have **Redcaps** (BBC1). We do not have Rednecks nor Roughcaps. Wake up or I'll set Sergeant O'Brien on you.

"If any of you are bullied at any stage, I want to know about it," said O'Brien without a glimmer of irony. This was Redcaps, a documentary series about the military police. It was O'Brien who, grinding a tooth or two, greeted the first hopeful arrival with "You've turned up in jeans for the Royal Military Police Training Centre, have you? With a girly chain round your shagging neck? GET THAT CHAIN OFF NOW!" Private Wakefield ("WAKE UP, WAKEFIELD!"), hardened to abuse from working at British Telecom's directory inquiries, buckled at the knees and had to be revived with a glass of water when Sergeant O'Brien spotted a speck of fluff on her epaulette.

Here are some simple questions for the aspiring Redcap. "Do you realise what would happen to the British army if everyone went sick EVERY TIME THEY GOT A SHAGGING COLD?" "Your cap badge should be a quarter of an inch above your left eye SO WHY IS IT ROUND YOUR SHAGGING EAR?" "Look at mine and look at yours. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?" The correct answer to this is: "Yours is shinier than mine, sarge." but on no account attempt to say it. All questions in the army are rhetorical.

Roughnecks, Kieran Prendiville's second series about oil rig workers, is like an old friend who has quite slipped your memory but who rushes back in every detail when you meet again. It was, you remember, about a band of brothers. Raucous, funny, tough and welded together by danger.

Izzy's lodging house is still bulbous with oil riggers. Most dramas boast one big bloke for general menacing-and-looming duties but Izzy's is like a waterhole for migrating wildebeest. "All perlummacking around the place" as Izzy puts it.

Inside the rig the workers are crammed into each other's reeking, riotous company. Outside is the huge and beautiful scoop of the vacant sky. Meanwhile terrorists with machine guns are boarding the rig. Now read on ...

Nothing so sad as a funny story. **Faulty Tours** (Short Stories, Channel 4) was about 11 Russians, who answered Bob Waters's enticing advertisement for a package holiday in Blackpool: "A gleaming city full of miracles and pleasant surprises with a sparkling night life that will shake up your emotions and plunge you into a maelstrom of passion." You had the first niggling suspicion that something had been gained in the translation.

A coach tour of the Golden Mile had been arranged. The Russians did not speak English. The guide did not speak Russian but he pumped away gamely with his foot to keep the sinking affair afloat. "Has anyone heard of Coronation Street? I don't believe it! Jack and Vera? 'ilda Ogden? No? Well, that's The World of Coronation Street and it's Blackpool's newest attraction. The illuminations are going to be switched on by a group called The Bee Gees. Can you raise your hands if you've heard of the Bee Gees? Nobody heard of the Bee Gees?"

By now the Russians were asking insistently how to get to London.

"Later," said Bob firmly. "Today we are going to take the tram to The Sand Castle."

The colours of innocence

David Hockney is a reluctant British superstar, but that doesn't stop him sticking his neck out, writes **Rachel Barnes**

DAVID HOCKNEY was recently described as "the intelligent anti-hero who brings innocence to the world and who takes on the burdens of knowledge without losing the freshness of his vision". Now that I have met him, this seems especially apt. I have never talked to a more reluctant superstar — nor a more innocent one. Yet, pick up last week's British papers and there he is, not merely submitting to publicity but generating it. First he weighs into the Julia Somerville photos-in-a-bath row with a defence of photographic beauty, brandishing a 1790 Fragonard painting as evidence. Then he attacks arts schools for neglecting to teach essential technical and craft skills.

Both could be seen as characteristically doughty defences of his twin ideals of beauty and innocence. "I think the world is a beautiful place and if we don't see it, we are a doomed species," he says. "I feel that my role as an artist is to try and overcome the sterility of despair." The boy from Bradford remains one of the most celebrated British artists. But he has also had plenty of criticism. He has been accused of not being a "serious" artist; worse, of being a populist, as if bringing pleasure to so many must somehow be questionable. It doesn't seem to bother him. "The best thing my father taught me was not to worry about what the neighbours think."

Hockney appears particularly bemused by the fuss about his Royal Academy show, the first retrospective entirely devoted to his works on paper. "I'll soon be back in Los Angeles getting on with my work and no one pays much attention to me there. But I suppose my decision to leave England and live in the States was partly to escape this."

From his earliest days at Bradford College of Art in the fifties, to what he calls his most recent "figurative abstractions", drawing has been an integral part of his art. At Bradford he was taught that drawing was a fundamental intellectual discipline. He is at best a brilliant and inspired draughtsman. His great friend R B Kitaj has described how he first met Hockney at the Royal College of Art in 1959 while he was working on a drawing of a skeleton. Kitaj was so impressed he instantly asked if he could buy it for £5 — an unusual request from one art student to another.

Their lasting friendship has been important to the artistic development of both artists.

"The first student I got to know was Ron Kitaj. We got on immediately. Also, his paintings straightaway fascinated me. He's about four years older than I am, which when you're 22 is a lot of difference, in experience anyway. He was a much more serious student than anybody else. He had a marvellous dry humour."

Hockney was upset by the unprecedented attack on Kitaj by the British press during his retrospective at the Tate last summer. "I told him to take no notice, but it was terribly hard for him because some of the criticism was so personal. They all got the wrong idea of Ron — as if he was some sort of aloof intellectual. He's not at all aloof. A bit isolated maybe but that's partly because, like me, he's quite deaf. It makes you more internal, more cut off.



Portrait of the artist as an angry older man, ranting against the cheapening of beauty and the sacrifice of skills PHOTO: HUMPHREY NEMAR

"It was so destructive — it was typical of the mean spirit of British art critics. The role of the critic should be to enthuse and elucidate. I don't want to read Ruskin on Manet because he didn't like Manet and so he had nothing interesting to say about him. Ruskin on Turner is marvellous, though, because he loved and understood his work."

It was while Hockney was at the Royal College of Art in 1959 that he started to experiment with the American Abstract Expressionism. But an art so rooted in a mystical abstraction would never exert a profound or lasting hold on a man whose art inclines far more to the decorative. He remains fundamentally a figurative artist, though he has signalled a change to his belief that abstract and figurative art are widely differing. "Are there two different kinds of painting?" he asks. "The old Chinese sage painter would have said 'No. It is all one. It's either all an abstraction or all representation'.



Study in charcoal: 'Pierre Saint Jean No 3' from 1984

"It isn't that I don't appreciate artists like Rothko. He told his truth. But Rothko was a Russian and he had a gloomy view of things. I know that the world can be tragic place and I know about all the vanity and folly which will never change. But I don't want to dwell on that in my paintings. I suppose in that way I come closer to Matisse's philosophy of an art 'devoid of troubling subject matter'."

This hasn't stopped him exploring human relationships in his work. The Walt Whitman poem Adhesiveness became the title of one of Hockney's early paintings about homosexual love affairs. His Third Love Painting caused a sensation and he was accused of flaunting homosexuality. This, after all, was 1960, when it was still illegal.

"I certainly didn't make these paintings on purpose to shock," he says, the innocence bubbling up again. "I don't believe people are really shocked by sex actually. I made them because I was thinking about my life, about being homosexual. Of course I had known it for years but I'd never done much about it. Being gay didn't especially bother me. Why I should it?"

Yet, in the late eighties, when Clause 28 was floated, he caused a stir by writing to newspapers attacking what he saw as a new onslaught on homosexuality. "I was so angry about the English petty-mindedness and intolerance. I had just finished reading Richard Ellmann's marvellous biography on Oscar Wilde and I thought, nothing changes. Wilde must have been the most charming, intelligent and generous man. He did no harm. The boys he went to bed with would have had a nice time. But the English system completely destroyed him."

He is equally exasperated by the British neglect of visual education. "Everyone has the potential of looking at things more carefully in the world about us. But you have to be helped to look. I think it's a very bad thing people aren't made to study art. Whole generations of people in England had no visual education and you can see the results all around us.

"I do believe that art should be a deep pleasure and a part of everyone's life. I do not think we can live without art of some form. I think I would be quite mad without it."

David Hockney: A Drawing Retrospective at London's Royal Academy, until January 28

Director's cruel cut

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

GERARD Corbiau's **Farinelli Il Castrato** is a musical extravaganza based on the life of Carlo Broschi, one of the last and most celebrated castrato singers of the 18th century.

It's a glamorously dressed period piece, with considerable erotic content and with wide appeal to music-lovers. Above all, it has a potentially fascinating story, since Broschi, who took the name Farinelli, was the contemporary equivalent of a rock star, adored by women and envied by men because of, or in spite of, his painfully illustrated castration at the age of 10.

The result, it must be said, is entertaining but uneven since the film clearly embroiders the truth with considerable gusto, shaping it into a romantic melodrama which libels Handel and makes Amadeus, by comparison, seem a model of historical accuracy.

Its main virtue is technical, with a successful marriage by the use of skilful morphing of the countertenor of Derek Lee Ragin with the soprano of Ewa Mallas-Godlewska to produce the soaring sounds of the man who so fluttered the hearts of the court ladies of the day that they were said to be prone to reach orgasm when he hit his top notes.

The music used is from Handel, Pergolese, Porpora, J A Hasse and Riccardo Broschi — Farinelli's brother — and it is set out in front of us in rather piecemeal fashion like display pieces on a "best of" music compilation.

In this romanticised version of history, Farinelli makes his debut in a Naples square, in competition with a trumpet player totally unable to reach the same heights. Later, he is invited by Handel to sing before the English court. He then deserts Handel and Covent Garden when the beautiful Alexandra (Elsa Zylberstein) persuades him to sing for the rival Nobles Theatre instead.

He realises, however, that Handel is the man and determines to perform his new score, stolen by Alexandra, now his lover. Handel swears he will never compose another opera.

Finally, in self-imposed exile and retirement with Alexandra at the Spanish court, a surprising pregnancy occurs. It is surprising to the world but not to us, since the women Farinelli beds are seduced with the assistance of his brother who finishes off what the singer begins but can't end. A top note or two might have done the trick even better.

This opportunity to give the film a bit of spice is taken with both hands, to say nothing of other organs, by Corbiau and his actors — Stefano Dionisi as a pouting but deliciously effete-looking Farinelli, could make Boy George green with envy.

What you certainly can say about Farinelli is that it is a European film that looks and sounds a treat and is never ponderous.

Mario Van Peebles's previous films, New Jack City and Posse, hardly suggested that he could accomplish a dramatised history of the Black Panther movement. But **Panther** is taken from an unpublished screenplay by his father Melvin, who made the seminal black movie Sweet Sweetback's Baadassss Song and is more likely to know what he is talking about.

The film, however, has not been well received among Panther veterans. The reason is obvious. It is politically naive and promulgates some conspiracy theories that would amaze even Oliver Stone.

But at least it is a watchable commercial offering that attempts, however simplistically, to tell young blacks (and whites) about their own recent history. Unfortunately, the characters are almost all stereotyped, black and white alike, and the film is cast in the mould of a docu-drama pushing highly selective old footage at us at the same time as providing a plethora of highly personalised fiction.

So you have to take what you get and swallow hard. And what you get is a rough and ready political thriller acted out by some handsome principals like Kadeem Hardison, Bokeem Woodbine, Courtney B Vance (as Seale) and Marcus Chong (Newton) with sincerity but not much subtlety.



The holy sisters of publicity

Catherine Bennett

A Simple Path
by Mother Teresa
Rider Books 192pp £9.99

The Missionary Position
by Christopher Hitchens
Verso 98pp £9.95

MOTHER TERESA likens herself to "a pencil in God's hands". Depending on your beliefs, this is either a wonder or an absurdity. Assuming that Mother Teresa is right, the ultimate author of her book can be none other than God. Not just ghosted, but Holy Ghosted, then. As the title promises, He keeps it simple. God, we discover, "loves a cheerful giver". Families who pray together, stay together. Suffering "is a great gift".

If so, Christopher Hitchens's little tirade will make a desirable Christmas present for any devout Catholic. In his fourth assault upon Mother Teresa's reputation, now coarsely titled and timed to cause the utmost offence to her admirers, he introduces himself as a spokesman for the Enlightenment, guided by the "poor candle of reason" to expose the shifty operator concealed beneath that innocent-looking wimple; to deride our beatification of a woman who should properly, he argues, be regarded as "a religious fundamentalist, a political operative, a primitive sermoniser and accomplice of worldly secular powers".

Holy pencil or wily international fixer? Neither book is likely to make converts, one way or the other. The Simple Path, written for devotees, and packaged as a small octavo, like the Pope's own book, is a sort of auto-hagiography, composed of assorted homilies, prayers, fragments of biography and radiant testimonies from Mother Teresa's followers. It has the pat sketchiness convenient to a life of a saint. "The message was quite clear," she relates, "I was to give up all and follow Jesus into the slums — to serve him in the poorest of the poor." Mother Teresa went a little further than that. When she dies she will leave behind a 4,000-strong religious order, the Missionaries of Charity, who embrace poverty in more than 500 convents and more than 100 countries.

Her followers' devotion to penury serves two purposes. One is to bring the poor closer to God. The other is to bring the missionaries closer to God. The object is not, emphatically, to improve the conditions that created the poor in the first place. To Mother Teresa, the poor are part of God's plan, so any attempts to vanquish poverty are implicitly critical of Him.

To a non-believer, this pious delight in suffering can sound creepy. Who are the real beneficiaries of the Mother Teresa organisation? The stories of her volunteers suggest that, in many cases, their ministrations are, as much as anything, a focus for personal development. "I've found peace," says one. "I just knew what I was doing was right for me," says another. Without any testimony from the poor of the world, we cannot know how it feels to be used as a sort of holy alternative to psychotherapy. Maybe, when you're the poorest of the poor, you don't care what motivates the nuns, so long as they come up with the clean clothes and free sandwiches.

Mother Teresa: 'Holy pencil' or 'wily fixer'? PHOTOGRAPH: DENIS THORPE

So Christopher Hitchens is perhaps unfair in condemning Mother Teresa for using the poor as an "occasion for piety". As he has not ascertained how the poor feel about it, he is arguably using them himself as an occasion for polemic. But his objections to Mother Teresa go further than this. Heaping invective upon obloquy, he complains that she is motivated by a reprehensible desire for sainthood; the political agent of fundamentalist factions inside the Vatican; the willing accomplice of wicked political regimes, and too virginal to deserve a hearing. In short, he objects to her being a devout, proselytising nun.

HOW COULD God's pencil possibly appeal to the poor candle of reason? Hitchens is rational; Mother Teresa is superstitious. He believes in the right to abortion; she, not unusually for a Catholic, believes that it is the worst evil in the world. He deplores the Vatican; she is its willing factotum. To deny Mother Teresa the right publicly to pronounce and practise her beliefs is to deny her any form of religious vocation beyond that of the anchoress.

As he cannot, reasonably, argue against freedom of conscience, Hitchens attempts a critique of Mother Teresa's personal motives and conduct, suggesting, for example, that she is not truly meek, but ambitious and arrogant. But many saints have been obnoxious. Perhaps Hitchens himself is full of prejudice, working with a dim, half-remembered model, derived from Victorian illustrations, of a saint as a fainting milksop? As Mother Teresa's conduct is inseparable from her faith, Hitchens's reprimands cannot but give the curious impression that he considers himself the better Catholic, presumably not the effect he seeks. "Modesty and humility are popularly supposed to be the saintly attributes," he says, as if genuinely anxious about her credentials for canonisation, "yet Mother Teresa can scarcely grant an audience without claiming a special and personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

He reports, as if scandalised, that the Missionaries of Charity covertly baptise the dying, under the guise of brow-mopping. What else do you expect a good missionary to do? Can he be worried that a Hindu or Muslim might be dispatched to the wrong Heaven? Or is he sincerely concerned about such an affront being offered to the personal liberties of the destitute? His suggestion that she misuses her funds is more promising; for even Catholics might protest if Mother Teresa were proved to be laying up treasure on Earth while patients in her hospices and clinics are subjected to pointlessly Spartan indignities and denied effective medication. But Hitchens has no idea how much money she has, nor how it is allocated and spent. He finds it equally difficult to substantiate his gravest allegation: that Mother Teresa has served both God and Mammon, deliberately lending her saintly reputation to a repulsive gallery of charlatans and rogues. A collection of embarrassing photographs and speeches fails to establish that she is anything worse than a holy simpleton, steadfastly, if deludedly, unselective in her choice of chums and donors, from Madame Michelle Duvalier to Robert Maxwell.

Hitchens is right to argue that even living saints should have their conduct scrutinised "without awe and reverence". But after several years on the job, he still has little to offer fellow-doubters beyond enduring suspicion and distaste.

Looking for trouble

Blake Morrison

Freelancing: Adventures of a Poet
by Hugo Williams
Faber 241pp £14.99

HUMILIATION is the invariable lot of poets, but each poet, and each new generation of poets, learns to be humiliated in different ways. Born with a gift, or sense of vocation, or unhappy compulsion to turn lines before they reach the edge of the page, poets gradually discover that writing verse is no kind of life, or livelihood: in order to survive, they have to get out occasionally and do something — however demeaning. Once they performed for rich patrons. These days, they fill the gaps between stanzas by running workshops, giving readings or writing reviews of other poets.

In Freelancing, Hugo Williams narrates his adventures as a successful but humbled poet. "Everyone knows poets will go anywhere and do anything in order to get out of the house," he writes, "providing there's a drink and seven people in the audience, only four of whom are friends of the organiser." Near the start of the book, Williams describes a typical excursion of his own. He is due to teach a workshop in South Acton but leaves his Pomagne bottle and poetry books on a station platform. Miraculously, when he backtracks, the books are still there, but have fallen into the hands of a railway guard who insists on a literary-critical seminar ("correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't a sentence supposed to have a verb?") before releasing them. Arriving at his class an hour late, Williams finds several students already drunk. One is a Welshman who can't understand the tutor's objections to his poem about a kitten. The tutor tries to explain. The other students support the Welshman. The tutor backs down. There is a hole in his plastic cup and Pomagne is running down his trousers . . .

Further humiliations follow. Williams runs another residential writing course where his fellow-tutor parodies his character, appearance and poetic manner. He makes a television documentary about Central America, but so alienates the crew that they will shoot only his trousers. He models for Esquire — a feature on fashionable male poets — but plucks out an incompatible Versace jacket and Armani suit. He goes out looking for drugs in order to beat a writing block and spends a terrified hour in a Bethnal Green high-rise.

If getting out from behind his desk proves risky, staying there isn't much safer. There are the files of old poems so bad he contemplates packing in writing altogether. There are the builders gutting the house next door, who stare curiously up at his window, as if he were in need of treatment for "sloth infestation". In offering up his shame and embarrassment, Williams doesn't ask us to think any better or worse of him, merely to understand that this is what his life is like.

It's doubtful, of course, how far Williams's are typical experiences, even among writers of his generation. Not many poets are married to tight-rope walkers. And only Williams, you feel, would temporarily abandon his old typewriter and take a word processor on holiday to a cottage in France with a single power-point ("The fridge had to be off while the computer was on, so my wife would sit typing away, her feet in the salad compartment, while a puddle of water formed round her chair.")

Much here will be recognisable, even to those for whom poetry isn't a regular habit: the readings organised by men with eyes red from crying and women with garlands in their hair, who "have just taken over from someone who committed suicide"; the workshops full of students who have been to Afghanistan or had sexual experiences with ghosts; the man who passes himself off as Ted Hughes to earn gropes from groupies. With his insider knowledge and wry detachment, Hugo Williams is the perfect comic guide to what it means to be a poet in the nineties.



Prose pantomime in suburbia

Matt Seaton

Marked for Life
by Paul Magrs
Chatto & Windus 217pp £12.99

"*ABSOLUTELY* cynical and absolutely sentimental at the same time. That's the combination we like," declares one of Paul Magrs's characters in Marked For Life. This is close to authorial statement, since it defines more than adequately Magrs's own approach to writing. It could almost be a manifesto for his brand of queer fiction, with its stylised blend of street-toughness and mawkish romanticism — it could, if his novel didn't end up being just good old camp.

Nevertheless, Marked For Life opens with an intriguing roster of characters: Mark, tattooed from head-to-toe and married to the volatile and foul-mouthed clothes-shop manager, Samantha; their alert young daughter, Sally; Samantha's eccentric mother, Peggy and her lover Iris, who imagines herself a latter-day version of Virginia Woolf's Orlando; Samantha's bit-on-the-side, the stolid policeman Bob; and Mark's ex-lover, the mysterious Tony, who pretends to write to Mark from prison.

If the cast-list sounds colourful, then the plot, too, is ambitious: Tony kidnaps Sally and the rest join in a Carry On-style ensemble effort to restore Sally to her parents and reconstitute their shaky, gender-bent partnership. Magrs seems to be aiming at black comedy, but Tony doesn't really cut it as a villain. So the dark stuff simply isn't convincingly dark: drama slips into melodrama and finally into a faggy bedroom farce.

The writing is so keen to draw attention to itself that the novel as a whole has a surface gloss, a kind of prose polyurethane. But if one can put aside the problem of characters who are predominantly sexual types pressed out of cardboard, then there are real flashes of wit. One could say the same, of course, about Puss In Boots, but then that doesn't pretend to be anything other than a panto.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Sketches by Boz, by Charles Dickens (Penguin Classics, £6.99)

AMAZINGLY, hitherto unpublished by Penguin Classics. Here are the youthful roots of Dickens's fiction: a collection of portraits and observations, arranged so that by the end of the book Dickens is actually writing short stories, but with the join between fiction and reportage polished to invisibility.

One Hot Summer in St Petersburg, by Duncan Fallowell (Vintage, £6.99)

FALLOWELL went to St Petersburg to write a novel. He came out with this instead, and it will do very nicely. A travel book driven by insight and style, rather than by event, which means that even the most mundane occurrences are given a certain power. And the place is such a mess that there's usually something wacky going on. What's a kilometre long and plays chess? The St Petersburg petrol queue.

Six Walks in the Fictional Woods, by Umberto Eco (Harvard University Press, £6.50)

A FEY TITLE for the Charles Eliot Norton lectures Eco delivered in 1993, and a chance to see Eco do what he is best at: his novels, with the one famous exception, tend towards unreadability, and his comic journalism is at best hit-and-miss. But these talks on what authors are getting up to, and what we get up to while reading them, are engaging and useful.

Russell's Big Strip Stupormarket, by Pete Loveday (John Brown Publishing, £7.99)

RUSSELL, underachieving but thoughtful, mildly depressive, and usually stoned, is a likeable cartoon creation. (He's at his best — less wordy — in The Idler.) If you want to know about soft-druggy lifestyles, New Agers and hippies, you couldn't do better than read this.

The Getaway; The Killer Inside Me; The Grifters; Pop. 1,280; by Jim Thompson, int. Tim Willocks (Picador, £7.99)

YOU MIGHT know Thompson's work second-hand: several of his novels have been filmed, as have all four in this collection — most memorably The Grifters and Sam Peckinpah's version of The Getaway — but it's not the usual case of mediocre fiction making great cinema. Getting inside the criminal mind, Thompson is top of the pulp league, rivalling Chandler in psychological insight if not fancy prose.

Pat Barker wins the Booker Prize

Michael Ellison

THE BOOKER PRIZE reclaimed its capacity for surprise this year when the judges rejected Salman Rushdie, the hottest favourite in the 27-year history of Britain's most important literary award.

Instead, they went for Pat Barker's The Ghost Road, the final part in her trilogy about the first world war. Until moments before the prize was announced this had not been a good year for controversy, with the best the panel could rustle up being the exclusion of Martin Amis from a shortlist of five, one fewer than the traditional number.

The choice of Barker was "amicable", in contrast to last year when one judge said James Kelman's victory was a disgrace. The other writer in contention was the outsider Tim Winton with The Riders. Rushdie smiled thinly and nodded when Barker's triumph was announced. "It's always disappointing not to win but Pat Barker is a very fine writer who deserves it," he said.

George Walden, the Conservative MP who chaired the judges, said of Barker's book: "The focus is on individuals and yet the book opens out into a masterly panorama of the first world war. The psychological analysis is as powerful as the emotional intensity."

Barker, aged 52, who won the Guardian fiction prize two years ago, wrote three unpublished "middle-class novels of manners" before the late Angela Carter advised her to draw on her background. "I realised I could and should write about the kind of women and community that formed me." Her grandmother, mother and sister had been cleaners but Barker, who was brought up by grandparents whose Teesside fish and chip shop failed, went to grammar school.

The Ghost Road, set in August 1918, relates the slaughter of the war through two men, one returning to the front after shell shock, the other the psychologist who treated him.

Giles Foden adds: "My subject is War, and the Pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity." Wilfred Owen wrote these words in the context of poetry having to deal with a new subject (mass warfare), rather than the birds, trees and flowers of the pre-war Georgian aesthetic.

The poet plays a bit part in Pat Barker's The Ghost Road. Owen is a fellow patient of the narrator Billy Prior at Craiglockhart Hospital, run by an army psychologist, William Rivers. The book is part of Barker's war trilogy: Regeneration (1991) charted Owen's friend Siegfried Sassoon's recuperation at Craiglockhart; The Eye In The Door (1993) compared Sassoon's experience with that of Prior, a bisexual working-class officer.



Pat Barker, the 'amicable' choice who won the £20,000 Booker Prize at the London Guildhall last week PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEASER

In The Ghost Road, Prior, returning to France in 1918, seems an "uncharitable bastard" as he puts it; at least in the brutal male and female sexual liaisons he packs in before he is due back at the front.

Just as sexuality works along a spectrum, so human sensibility in the face of war cannot be divided into "officer" or "Tommy", "enemy" or "ally"; nor can the shell-shock victim be labelled "sane" or "mad". "My nerves are in perfect working order," Prior writes to Rivers. "By which I mean that in my present situation the only sane thing to do is to run away, and I will not do it. Test passed?"

The carnal wit of Prior's voice marks out The Ghost Road as an important book. With his divided sexual and class loyalties, he seems a very contemporary figure, yet also a fitting monument to the mounds of historical dead. It is the casual shovelling away of the blasted bodies that counts; to have recognised this, and the pity of this, is Pat Barker's achievement.

● This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Guardian Fiction Award, which is given annually to a new work by a British or Commonwealth novelist. The 1995 shortlist is made up of The Information by Martin Amis (Flamingo, £15.99), Heart's Journey In Winter by James Buchan (Harvill, £14.99), The Unconsoled by Kazuo Ishiguro (Faber, £15.99), The Ghost Road by Pat Barker (Viking, £15), The Smell Of Apples by Mark Behr (Abacus, £8.99) and The Moor's Last Sigh by Salman Rushdie (Cape, £15.99). The winner of the £2,000 prize will be announced at the beginning of December.

Distant visions of a generous heart

John Mullan

Raymond Williams: The Life
by Fred Inglis
Routledge 324pp £19.99

IN ONE of the many affectionate recollections of Raymond Williams that enliven this biography, a friend of his wife, Joy, remembers why he left the Communist Party in the early forties. Other intellectuals of the left would renounce the CP only when the Soviet Union's tanks rumbled into one of its satellite states (and sometimes not even then).

Williams, however, abandoned it long before the crises of faith of the fifties and sixties. He did so when Cambridge aparatchiks inquired after the ideological suitability of his then fiancée. Their interest in his marriage plans was quite enough to turn him away from the party. The personal was certainly not going to be the political.

The story suggests why Fred Inglis finds himself wondering, more than once, why he is writing this book. For he has chosen a subject largely protected from biography: a man whose private self was quietly but fiercely defended from all intrusions. The very characteristic that seemed to make Williams such a commanding and necessary intellectual figure for the British left also makes him an unpromising subject for the biographer. He kept an apparently unperturbed distance from those who admired him. (These included his students: in the sixties, protesting undergraduates occupied his Cambridge rooms, refusing to leave until he agreed to teach them.) He was influential, says Inglis, because, at times when "turbulent feelings" drove other socialists, he had "a gift for indifference".

This distance gave a quality to his work, undistracted by local squabbles. It permitted the "generous-hearted vision of a common culture" that made Culture And Society and The Long Revolution such influential texts in the sixties (setting the agenda, as Inglis points out, for the first Open University courses). They were books for their times, envisaging a society's more democratic senses of culture, yet reaching back through 150 years to trace "the lost veins of English romantic socialism".

Inglis describes an intellectual skilled at imagining future consensus somewhere beyond the ructions of his fellow-socialists. In a telling digression, he says that Williams was the best committee chairman he ever knew — gifted at reconciling "the often violently conflicting emotions and opinions around the table". He means it as high praise.

The aloofness imposed its limitations, sometimes comically. It was natural that Williams, with his interest in the ordinariness of culture, should have written Communications in 1962, providing media studies with "its first, and forever essential, textbook". Perhaps few of his readers have realised that this analysis of the roles of press, radio and television in the formation of culture was written by a man who, at the time, did not take a newspaper or have a television. All his important work seems to have been produced in confident solitude.

Thus, Inglis believes, he had the good fortune to be drawn only belatedly by the Marxism that beguiled his contemporaries. His thinking was fed by the values of his working-class father, and the arguments rehearsed with the Workers' Education Association — teaching the Great Tradition in Sussex Nissen huts (though with the time off for writing that any academic would envy). Inglis sees how Williams could use this past to avoid explaining himself and he is scathing about the account of Williams's own development he gave in Politics And Letters in 1979. Yet he is also a partisan for Williams's sense of "idealism and vocation", his work for a widened access to culture.

Inglis cannot help respecting Williams's powers of "elusiveness and concealment" ("clenched withdrawal" is Terry Eagleton's less sympathetic phrase). So he has written not an account of a private life, but an abbreviated biography of British left-intellectual debate since 1945. As such, it is consistently melancholy, as well as being heartfelt and engaging. As he documents Williams's involvement in the founding of the New Left Review, the composing of the May Day Manifesto of 1967, or the confused reactions of the left to rightwing populism in the eighties, he ruefully chronicles the self-delusions, and above all the foolish self-righteousness, of socialist intellectuals in Britain.

As he does so, he is often harsh on aspects of Williams's own work. This biography may be "an act of homage", but, in order to reclaim his books for "a long canon of humanism", he constantly worries at their failures; their escapes into abstraction; the often "dreary prose" of even the most "humane inquiries". Inglis had to write a biography because he believes that Williams celebrated "civic virtues" in "his life, more than his books". In this commitment are the sadness and honesty which characterise this book. With what Inglis calls the "going-down" of the "big stories" that socialists have made of history, he must turn to the "moral example" of an individual life. Biography must be our guide.

Chess Leonard Barden

CHESS is a war game, but only one grandmaster has ever died in combat. He was the most promising young player of his time, a rare talent who might have seriously challenged for the world title.

Klaus Junge was killed in action in April 1945, aged 21. Four years earlier, he tied for the German championship, and on the Nazi tournament circuit of 1941-42 was the near-equal of world champion Alekhine and the then number two, Keres. He defeated Alekhine once, while at Prague 1942, his last tournament before military call-up. Alekhine needed a brilliancy in their final-round game to tie first with the German.

Today several 17- and 18-year-olds play at the highest level, but in the thirties the young GMs were in their twenties before they matched Alekhine and Capablanca. Junge was probably the strongest ever of his age until Fischer and Spassky set new teenage records.

His style was impressive, too, combining sharp opening theory with tactically rich middle games. In this week's game, Junge knowledgeably uses a variation made famous by Botvinnik, whose world title he might have taken had he lived.

Heinz Lehmann-Klaus Junge, Rostock 1942

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c6 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 Nxg5 hxg5 10 Bxg5 Nbd7 11 Qf3 Bb7 12 Be2 Rg8 13 h4 Qb6 14 exf6 c5 15 d5 b4 16 Bxc4 bxc3 17 dxe6 cxb2 18 Rb1 Rxg5 19 exf7+ Kd8 20 Qc3 Rxg2 21 Rxb2 Qc7 22 Rh3 Rg1+ 23 Ke2 Bg2 24 Rg3 Bf1+ 25 Kd1 Qd6+ 26 Rd2 Qxg3 27 fxg3 Bd3 mate.

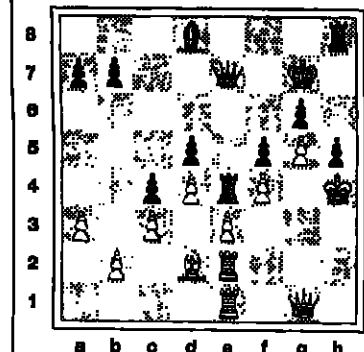
A new German book provides fresh details of Junge's death, which was previously dated April 17, 1945, at Welle, 30 miles south of Hamburg. On the 17th, most of the British 7th tank division was fighting just south of Welle, where their attack began only on the 18th.

There, says an eyewitness account, Lieutenant Klaus I (probably a mistake for J — Junge was an artillery lieutenant) had collected a dozen scattered soldiers. Civilians offered them milk, then left the town. Lieutenant I conveyed the impression that "he still wanted to win the war".

When the first tanks rolled in, they were shot at but Lieutenant I and two other soldiers were killed. All three were buried in the cemetery. The Welle cemetery register shows only one lieutenant buried there, so it is probably Junge.

Most world-class chess players are instinctive survivors. Alekhine wangled his way out of post-revolution Russia to further his career in the West; Korchnoi used ration books of dead relatives to survive the siege of Leningrad. Junge chose idealistic bravery, but even by patriotic criteria he was wrong. If he had surrendered or gone home to Hamburg, he would have been a western rival to the Soviet GMs by the early fifties, and post-war chess history might have been very different.

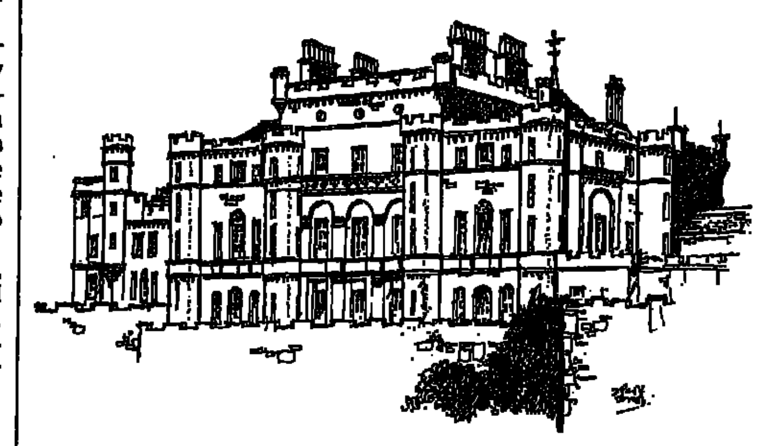
No 2396



Larry Evans v Nikola Karaklaic, Reggio Emilia 1962. What should Black play next?

No 2395: 1 Rh8! mates quickly. After White's 1 Rc6?? Black can win by Rg5! threatening Qg3+.

Grace and favour



Colin Luckhurst

CULZEAN CASTLE, **standing high atop the west-facing Ayrshire cliffs, is Robert Adam's gracious sandstone building, commissioned by the Earl of Cassillis, whose descendants occupied it for several generations until mounting debt and death duties persuaded the family to pass it into the care of the National Trust for Scotland in 1945.**

It was here, in the Brewhouse Flat at the foot of the west wing, that we spent the October half-term week. Our shepherdess is engaged in the instruction of the young, and this necessarily conditions the timing of our occasional escapes from The Droppings.

The views from Culzean are sensational. From the window we looked out to Arran, the highest peak of which, Goat Fell, was wreathed in mist on an afternoon of still airs.

Beyond Arran, the long arm of the Mull of Kintyre stretches southwards towards the distant coast of Ulster, which lies low on the horizon. The great bulk of Ailsa Craig loomed out of intermittent mist just down the coast. By night, the number of flashing lighthouses acted as a reminder of the volume of sea traffic, from the age of sail to the nuclear submarine, which enters the Firth of Clyde and its sheltering lochs.

The Brewhouse Flat provided spacious and, indeed, gracious accommodation. It is one of several possible lets within the boundaries of the estate, and the privilege of residence requires only that you be organised enough to make a booking, probably some months ahead, and pay the rent as required.

We satisfied these prerequisites and the Brewhouse Flat, furnished in a heroic style through the generous bequest of a National Trust member and matching the scale and dignity of the apartments on floors of the castle above, gave a feeling of life in a stately home. A fine feature of the flat furnishings was a long-case clock made by A&M Marshall of Wishaw at a date in our history which, from the superimposed portrait of the young Victoria, could have been no later than 1842.

The name of the flat also offered a reminder that the original occupant brewed beer for the castle residents. At a guess, that first resident concocted a malted liquor which owes little to the beneficial presence of the hop. A knowledgeable friend of mine, a drinks sector analyst with respectable city brokers, who needs to survey the contemporary Scottish brewers, describes their practice as "waving a small bag of hops over the vat every other week".

The discovery of a gas works showed that at its heyday in the 19th century the castle was almost a small town in its own right. Coal was landed on the beach by a Clyde puffer and carted up to the gas works at the beach head. The gas house manager, who enjoyed residential benefits of an adjoining cottage, supervised the production, storage and distribution of the gas supply to the castle and its residents 200ft above him up the cliff.

The production process started with coking the newly landed coal in the retorts. The job is illustrated in an action cameo in the restored gas house funded by British Gas. With butlers, footmen, cooks, maids, gardeners, coachmen and their families, as well as the resident family of the Earl of Cassillis, things must have been pretty busy at Culzean in its Victorian golden age.

OUR LATE **October week co-incided with the rutting season. The bellows of the dominant stag in the deer park, a finely antlered specimen, echoed through the woodland. The hinds shivered with no doubt pleasurable anticipation of his attentions, and an immature rival sheltered in the farthest reaches of the park.**

The gardens, washed by mild maritime air, were a tribute to the possibilities of the Scottish garden — the palm trees which line Fountain Court lawn were host to the tiny goldcrest, no larger than the wren but with dramatic yellow head marking. I was able to identify them with the aid of a 1927 Oxford Handbook Of British Birds which lay in the book case — as good as any more up-to-date volume and with artwork better than some recent books.

Quick crossword no. 288

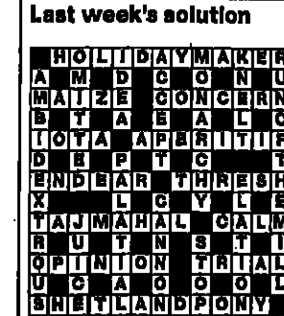
Across

1 Trouble (13)
8 Scull (3)
9 Elucidated (9)
10 Fume (8)
11 African — wasteland (4)
13 Her gaze turned to stone (6)
14 Bell tower (6)
16 It makes cloth — appear distinct (4)
17 Dissuaded (8)
20 Widespread (9)
21 Hotel (3)
22 Peppermint-flavoured liqueur (5,2,6)

Down

1 Fetters (5)
2 Gas produced in breathing (6,7)
3 Unnecessary (8)
4 Detected (6)
5 Mohammedan priest (4)
6 Maverick (13)
7 Aged (7)
12 Army call to awake (8)
13 Snail, mussel e.g. (7)
15 Tenant (6)
18 Thick (5)
19 Yield (4)

Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

THE 1995 World Championships for the Marlboro Bermuda Bowl (Open) and Venice Cup (Women) were held in Beijing last month. A perfect combination of Chinese culture and hospitality with western technology and organisation ensured that the championships were a resounding success. Beijing is a vast, bustling city of 13 million souls, and everything there is done on a grand scale.

From the opening banquet — eight courses of imperial Chinese cuisine held in the Great Hall of the People in Tiananmen Square — it was clear that no effort would be spared to create a tournament of spectacle and splendour.

Bridge is growing in popularity at an amazing rate among the Chinese people. Their national teams, particularly their women, are fast making a name for themselves on the world stage. The closest of the quarter-final matches in the Bermuda Bowl was between France, the Olympic champions, and the host nation. It ended in a victory to France by just 3 IMPs, and that result would have been reversed but for this deal, which came three boards from the end of the match. The hand might almost be a riddle in the Zen philosophy which many Chinese follow: at one table, declarer played 3NT correctly to make 10 tricks, while at the other declarer played 2NT correctly to go one down! How is this possible? See for yourselves — love all, dealer South:

	North	
	♠QJ6	
	♥853	
	♦Q2	
	♣K8653	
West		**East**
♠7543		♠AK8
♥J10		♥AQ942
♦87654		♦93
♣109		♣Q74
	South	
	♠1092	
	♥K76	
	♦AKJ10	
	♣AJ2	

In the Closed Room, Michel Lebel for France opened 1NT as South, 15-17, and Philippe Cronier as North raised him to game. West, playing for his partner's hand, found the threatening lead of the jack of hearts and declarer had to take some tricks quickly. Lebel won the king of hearts when East ducked, he crossed to the queen of diamonds and played a club to the jack, and when that suit behaved kindly he took five clubs, four diamonds and a heart for 430 to France.

In the Open Room, Shao for China also opened 1NT, but Rong as North raised to only 2NT. South passed, and Michel Perron also led the jack of hearts. Paul Chemla ducked to declarer's king, and Shao found himself with a completely different problem to his counterpart at the other table. He needed only eight tricks, and if he could establish a spade to go with a heart, four diamonds and two clubs, he would be able to make his contract without risking the club finesse.

Shao won the king of hearts and played a spade — but Chemla was able to win this and cash four hearts to go with his two top spades. So France scored 50 in this room to go with 430 in the other, a gain of 10 IMPs. Had Shao been in 3NT, he would have made his contract in the same way as Lebel, and China would have won the match. Had he followed an inferior line in 2NT, he would have made that for a loss of just 6 IMPs, and again China would have been in the semi-finals. ©

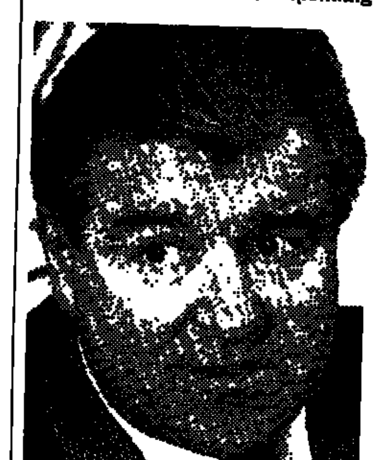
Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Venables backed

CLAIMS by England football coach Terry Venables that he is a victim of an orchestrated smear campaign are being investigated by Scotland Yard. They are expected to send a report to the Crown Prosecution Service within the next few days.

Police confirmed that investigations were taking place and that up to four people could be charged with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

The Football Association continues to keep its faith in him. The chairman of the FA's international committee, Noel White, responding to a report that an unnamed committee member had voiced disquiet about the coach's continuing court actions, said: "In January 1994 Terry Venables was our choice as the man to lead our effort. He remains that choice today."



Venables: remains FA's first choice despite new probe

However, it is understood that if anything is proved against Venables his job may still be in jeopardy.

One former occupant of the England hot seat looking for work is Graham Taylor, who resigned his post as manager of Wolverhampton Wanderers on Monday. Taylor expressed his regret that his tenure at Molineux had not proved successful, citing the hostility of a section of the crowd as a contributing factor in his decision to quit.

AN APPEAL by Duncan Ferguson against a 12-match ban has been rejected by the Scottish Football Association. Everton had hoped the SFA would show leniency after the striker was jailed for three months following an on-field assault on Raith Rovers' John McStay when playing for Rangers. However, the tribunal did decide to start the ban immediately and not on November 22, when Ferguson is likely to be released from prison. "It seems vindictive to me," Peter Johnson, the Everton chairman, said. "The tribunal had a good opportunity to redress the situation." The club are considering going to the European Court of Human Rights.

Meanwhile England international Paul Gascoigne is to be the subject of an investigation by police in Scotland following allegations of violence committed by the Rangers midfielder during his club's match at the weekend against Aberdeen that left opponent Paul Bernard requiring six stitches in his chin.

Gascoigne claimed that he was punched and spat at during the game but admitted that he "gave it out as well".

FRED COUPLES and Davis Love III of the United States won the World Cup of Golf at Shenzhen, China, for the fourth successive year with a 33-under-par total of 543 for a 14-shot victory over Robert Allenby and Brett Ogle of Australia. Scotland shared third place with Japan. Love clinched a double triumph when he won the individual event on the fifth hole of a dramatic play-off with Japan's Hisayuki Sasaki.

"It was a goal of mine to win the individual — it is the only thing I have not done in this tournament," said Love. "Fred won last year and now we have one each."

In Dar es Salaam, Nick Price won the £65,000 King Hassan II Trophy. It was the world No 3's first win of 1995.

THE SPANISH sun is shining on British cycling star Jeremy Hunt. He will join the five-times Tour de France winner Miguel Indurain's Banesto team next year. "We have been following him all season," said Indurain's manager, Francis Lafargue. "We have been really impressed with him." The 21-year-old Hunt is the first Briton to turn professional alongside a reigning Tour winner.

RUSSELL COUTTS of New Zealand and Isobel Autissier of France have been named World Sailors of the Year. They were chosen by voters from more than 60 countries. Coutts was skipper of New Zealand's Black Magic, 5-0 winner of the America's Cup, and Autissier is the first women to win a leg of the BOC single-handed race round the world. She took the first, from Charleston to Cape Town, 1,200 nautical miles ahead of the next competitor.

HENRY WHARTON knocked out Sam Storey of Belfast in the 27th second of the fourth round at Halifax to retain his European and Commonwealth super-middleweight titles. Wharton finished the contest with a huge left hook that sent Storey crashing to the canvas.

ENGLAND'S Del Harris, the former world junior squash champion, produced the performance of his life but was beaten 15-10, 17-14, 16-17, 15-8 by Jansher Khan of Pakistan in the final of the World Squash Open in Nicosia. It was Harris's first final appearance but a record seventh title of Khan, overtaking the six he shared with Jahangir Khan.

THE recent run of victories for British tennis star Tim Henman came to an end when he was beaten 7-6, 6-3 by Joao Cunha-Silva of Portugal in the semi-finals of the ATP challenger tournament in Beijing.

DEAD unlucky: Luigi Coluccio, a 23-year-old amateur footballer, has been given a one-match ban — nine days after he was gunned down outside a bar in southern Italy. The posthumous ban, say the officials, was unavoidable as the ref had submitted his report before the shooting took place.

Rugby Union International Wales 19 Fiji 15

Tourists decry Welsh fear of flying

Robert Armstrong in Cardiff

THE Jonathan Davies factor and another testing friendly against Italy lie intriguingly ahead of Wales before this season's Five Nations tournament, but on Saturday they put a dismal losing streak behind them and almost certainly secured the caretaker Ken Bowring in the job of national coach.

Characteristically Wales flirted with disaster — and even fell behind 13-15 in the second half — but sufficient basic organisation has been instilled by Bowring, and the defence was equal to a fearsome late Fijian onslaught.

Perhaps as a sign of the times Neil Jenkins, who scored an opportunist try and kicked three penalty goals, also made a major contribution in defence.

As Wales's captain John Humphreys pointed out: "We had nine players taking part in their first international at the Arms Park and they coped very well."

Fiji ought to have reached 20 points without fuss but their goal-kicker Waqa missed a penalty and a conversion close to the posts. Likewise Wales might have scored four tries instead of two: on one occasion they were denied because of a double movement, on another they failed to get the ball down.

Brad Johnstone, Fiji's technical coach, criticised Wales for lack of enterprise. "Welsh players won't try anything with an element of risk because they're afraid of making mistakes," he said. "The problem is rooted in club rugby where the coaches and the players are afraid they will get it in the neck if they move the ball and then end up losing three games in a row. The end result is predictable rugby."

Johnstone's strictures apart, Wales have reasons for optimism, especially the performances of their new caps, the flanker Craig Quinnell and the prop Lyndon Mustoe, who were boldly competitive and effective at close quarters against powerful opponents. Moreover, when the centre Nigel Davies went off injured in the first half Aled Williams came on at fly-half and the flexible Jenkins switched smoothly to midfield.

The scrum-half Andy Moore gave Wales the ideal start with a seventh-minute try from the base of a scrum in the left corner. Ten minutes later Fiji were penalised for a late tackle on the edge of the box and Jenkins tapped quickly and darted over in the left corner.

However, Fiji were allowed off the hook on the half-hour when Taylor threw out a loose pass intended for Evans which was intercepted by Bari, who sprinted 50 metres to score at the posts. Shortly before half-time Waqa added a short penalty goal to his conversion to level the scores.

After 48 minutes Fiji scored a superb try when their full-back Rayasi burst between two defenders and sidestepped neatly to touch down. But in the end Jenkins's goalkicking, which included two 30-metre penalties, proved a bridge too far for the tourists. Fiji did the lap of honour but Wales just about deserved the spoils.

● Italy jolted the Springboks when they rallied from 17-6 down to lead with a 15-point blitz in the opening 15 minutes of the second half in Rome, before the world champions moved up a gear to finish 40-21

France 22 New Zealand 15

France find answer blowing in the wind

Ian Malin in Toulouse

LOCALS in France's rugby capital call the vent d'Autun, which blows through the city, "the wind of madness". On a day of unforgettable drama it tormented the All Blacks and swept France to a victory that barely seemed possible after a chaotic few weeks.

The posts at the Stadium Municipal were bent back like tuning forks in the teeth of the gale. Sean Fitzpatrick, the All Blacks' captain, fatally opted to play into the wind during the first half, allowing France to run up a 17-3 lead. Simon Culhane's four penalties after half-time helped the All Blacks claw back to within two points of their hosts before Philippe Saint-André brought the 35,000 crowd to its feet with the coup de grâce, France's third try, 10 minutes from time.

The deciding Test in Paris on Saturday promises to be momentous. The French, a logical people, turned logic on its head. A row between their players over money and team selection, which boiled over with the resignation of their team manager Andre Herrero, galvanised the young side into a performance of passion and ferocity. The All Blacks were almost cowed by the noise and fervour of the crowd.

Jonah Lomu, eulogised in the match programme as "Le Michael Jordan du Rugby", has now played three times against France and always been on the losing side. For once he was a peripheral figure, coming into the game only rarely and then more as a back-row bulldozer as Zinzan Brooke fed the ball to him from the base of scrums.

France's two new 20-year-old centres, Richard Dourthe and Thomas Castaignède, were rock-like in defence and the latter, in his home town, kicked seven points, including a first-half penalty from inside his own half.

One abiding image was of Dourthe grabbing his opposite number Frank Bunce and showing him the scoreboard after Saint-André's try. It was a cruel taunt but underlined the swagger and confidence of the Tricolores.

Blueprint for change

England strikes out alone for rugby shake-up

Robert Armstrong

ENGLAND is set for an historic showdown with France, Wales, Scotland and Ireland over the future of the Five Nations Championship.

Last week Tony Hallett, the Rugby Football Union secretary, defended his union's plan to hold the game's oldest tournament in May and make a potential £100 million from the sale of the television rights. But he admitted the need for hard bargaining with the other unions to make the idea a reality.

Hallett led the presentation of a special report on professionalism by the RFU's commission at Twickenham that will serve as a blueprint for the long-term future of English rugby. The most controversial of the commission's proposals, the shifting of the Five Nations from its dates in January, February and March, is likely to be opposed by the players, who with the four other unions have not yet been consulted.

The greatest obstacle to holding the championship on successive Saturdays and Sundays in May is likely to be France, which has a long-standing agreement with TV to hold its national championship finals in May. "God knows what the French will think about this," the chairman of the RFU's executive, John Jeavons-Fellows, said with a smile. "Perhaps all the unions will tell us to bugger off."

Jeavons-Fellows, one of England's representatives on the Five Nations committee, which next meets on December 12, will play a crucial part in the RFU's attempt to persuade its competitive partners that such a radical change is in their interest.

The collective response of the players, who are forming a Rugby Union Players' Association, could make or break the RFU's blueprint, which also envisages English clubs participating in Continental competition next autumn.

Other changes proposed are:

- **The 120-day qualification rule reduced to seven days next season;**
- **Division Two increased from 10 to 14 clubs and Division Three from 10 to 16 next season;**
- **The top four Division One clubs entered in a European tournament with the remaining six in an Anglo-Welsh competition;**
- **Players' contracts lodged at Twickenham, with cash channelled through headquarters. Players will not receive any part of a transfer fee;**
- **A new national disciplinary panel for sent-off players to correct imbalances in sentencing;**
- **A pre-season Charity Shield match between the Courage and Heineken League winners.**